Commentary
September 2003

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Books in Review

Nathan Glazer • James Q. Wilson • Steven G. Marks
David Gelernter • Sam Munson • Dan Seligman

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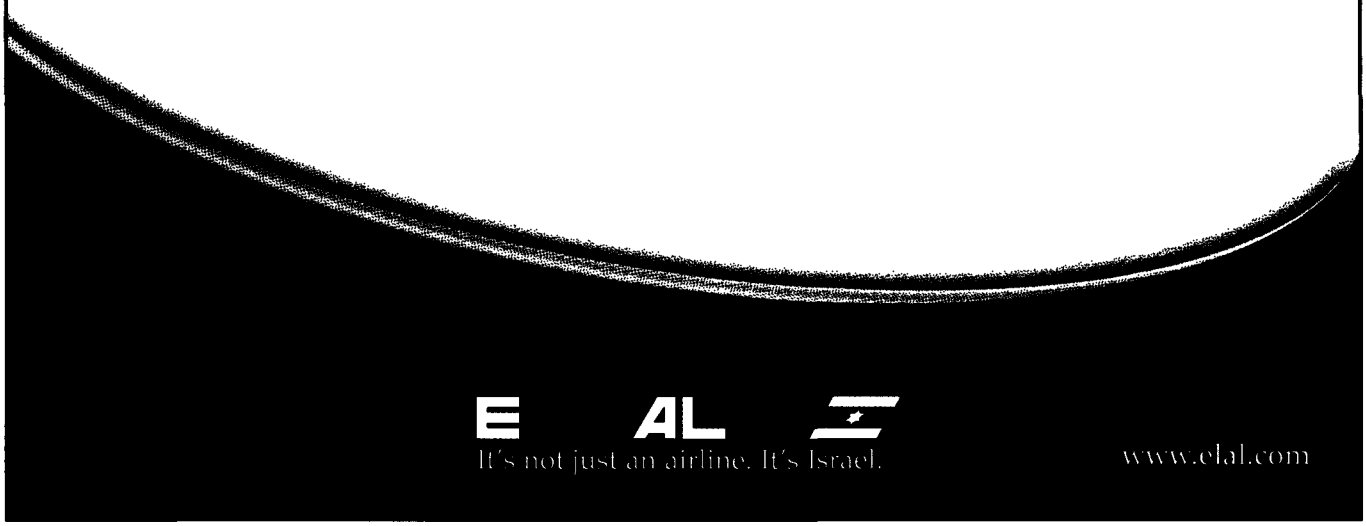

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Commentary

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Commentary
September 2003

Letters from Readers

Mapping Peace?

To the Editor:

Instead of offering creative and constructive ideas for overcoming the obstacles on the road to peace in the Middle East, Abraham D. Sofaer falls back on sophistry, old slogans, and arguments bordering on demagoguery ["The U.S. and Israel: The Road Ahead," May].

First, referring to Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, Mr. Sofaer somewhat disingenuously speaks of "the plain legitimacy of building places to live in what Israelis regard as their historic (though not exclusive) homeland." In fact, during more than three decades of the settlements' existence, not a single country (save Israel itself) has recognized their legitimacy or legality. The parallel Mr. Sofaer draws between Israeli settlers and Arab citizens of Israel is baseless, since Arab towns in Israel are perfectly legal.

Settlements deprive Palestinians of their land, their livelihood, and their freedom of movement. To preserve its own moral foundations, Israel should cease building new settlements and dismantle existing ones. The settlements are detrimental to Israel's own best interests in other ways, too. Instead of having a contiguous border to defend, Israel has to protect hundreds of scattered communities in the West Bank and Gaza. A large number of Israeli settlers have lost their lives because they chose to live outside Israel proper, and many Israeli soldiers have needlessly died protecting them.

Second, Mr. Sofaer's use of the term *Judenrein* with reference to a future evacuation of the settlements is especially inappropriate. The term *Judenrein*, "clean of Jews," was coined by the Nazis to refer to areas from which all Jews had been removed to death camps. As Mr. Sofaer surely knows, far from being sent to such a fate, Israelis evacuated from the settlements as part of a peace agreement will be sent home to Israel proper, and given generous compensation to boot.

Third, Mr. Sofaer claims that "the guiding assumption of all international efforts to achieve peace is that no Jew should be allowed to reside in any Palestinian area." In fact, the guiding assumption is that Jewish settlers would never give up their Israeli citizenship, disarm, and become loyal Palestinian citizens, and that unless they did so, the Palestinians would rightly insist on their removal. No nation would willingly allow groups of armed, hostile foreigners to live in its territory. To demand that the Palestinians do so demonstrates a shocking lack of good faith.

Finally, Mr. Sofaer flatly states that "a right of return is antithetical to peace, and must be renounced. . . . Justice requires no less." If this were true, Mr. Sofaer would surely call upon Jews to renounce *their* right of return in the name of peace and justice. Yet he fully supports the Jews' right of return, not only to Israel proper, but also to the West Bank and Gaza. This makes no sense.

Under the Israeli law of return, all adherents of the Jewish faith, including converts and their descendants, are automatically granted citizenship upon moving to Israel. Yet a Palestinian family that fled its home in Jaffa or Haifa in 1948 is not allowed to return, or even to receive compensation for its property. This is not what "justice requires"; it is an affront to the very concept of justice.

No Palestinian leader could ever renounce the right of return and remain a Palestinian leader. More importantly, no Israeli government would ever consider allowing millions of Palestinians to settle in its territory. A far more constructive position would be

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for Israel to limit the application of its law of return to the internationally recognized borders of the state of Israel. In return, Israel would be justified in demanding that the Palestinians limit *their* right of return to the internationally recognized borders of the future Palestinian state.

The murderous Palestinian *intifada* has caused many Israelis—and their supporters abroad—to lose their common sense and react emotionally. Indeed, it is difficult to expect people to think rationally when their friends and relatives are being blown up around them. But if we truly want to embark on the road to peace, it is high time we all returned to reason.

URI TADMOR
Jakarta, Indonesia

TO THE EDITOR:

Abraham D. Sofaer offers a powerful indictment of America's policies toward Israel and, avoiding the typical traps of moral equivalence and wishful thinking, articulates things that supporters of Israel tend to gloss over because of their general satisfaction with the Bush administration. It is indeed disturbing that Israel has not been permitted to fight with us as an ally in Iraq or Afghanistan; that we continue to scold Israel for fighting, even more carefully than we do, the war against terror; that everyone assumes Palestine must be *Judenrein*; that we have not moved our embassy to Jerusalem; and that we have not demanded normalization of relations with Israel at least among those Arab nations that have signed peace treaties with it.

I was surprised, however, by Mr. Sofaer's easy assumption that the two-state solution everyone regards as inevitable is a "reasonable" aim. In fact, such a plan is as fantastic as the road map itself. Any Palestinian state would have to be demilitarized. But when has demilitarization worked anywhere? For how long? After the *Karine A* affair, why should we believe that arms smuggling will not occur?

Mr. Sofaer is right that the underlying reason peace has eluded Israel is Arab anti-Semitism and rejectionism. But an additional reason is that there is no rational way to realize a two-state solution. Israel is too tiny to yield any more of itself than was taken away when its mandated hinterland was handed to the Hashemites. It is both lawful and necessary for Israel to retain control of land used to launch attacks on it. The better plan, if the Palestinians really want a state (I doubt this, or they would not resort to violence every time they were offered one), is to require the Arabs to carve it out of their own vast lands.

LOUISE WEINBERG
School of Law
University of Texas
Austin, Texas

TO THE EDITOR:

Abraham D. Sofaer's otherwise trenchant analysis of the fundamental flaws in the so-called road map to peace neglects to mention its most serious problem: the lack of any penalty for Palestinian nonperformance. Though the road map proclaims itself to be "performance-based," this is pure rhetoric. Under the plan, Palestinians would in no way be irrevocably worse off if, for example, they were to restart the *intifada*. The sole consequence of noncompliance is the suspension of forward progress—not any tangible loss of political achievements.

Until Palestinians have something to lose, their best strategy is to turn the terror spigot on and off as necessary. After all, why abandon a strategy that advances your cause and that results in no loss of political (not to mention physical) ground?

BEN DAVID ORLANSKI
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

In his persuasive critique of the State Department's quixotic "road map," Abraham D. Sofaer does endorse one aspect of that plan. He calls upon Israel to end its policy of destroying the homes of homicide bombers on the grounds that it is a form of collective punishment, sometimes results in the death of innocents, and is not legally defensible.

Without ceding the last point, I would argue that the law is neither the only nor the most relevant dimension for judging Israel's demolition policy. The defining context, after all, is the existential war the Arab rejectionists have brought against the Jewish state and the vicious instrument they have fashioned for the purpose. Against this threat, Israel's national-security objectives reflect its highest moral values: to survive this war by defeating the terrorists, to minimize Israeli and Palestinian casualties, and to make peace with the Palestinian people when they are willing to renounce terrorism.

House demolitions cannot substitute for direct operations to root out the terrorist infrastructure and leadership, but they can dissuade would-be martyrs, who may decline enlisting in the first place if the posthumous price of their act includes the family home. This deterrent has not dissuaded all recruits or moved all parents to greater oversight, but even its partial success has saved innocent Israeli lives.

It is true that innocents—like the unfortunate American Rachel Corrie, who lost her footing while protesting a scheduled demolition—are sometimes killed accidentally in these operations. But this is what happens when people choose to enter a combat zone, or to remain in harm's way.

Mr. Sofaer's call for a redirection of American policy along lines that affirm the non-negotiability of Israel's existence is morally and strategically compelling. But in the final analysis the foundation of Israel's national security is its own moral strength and strategic clarity. Israel may at some point decide to suspend its policy of demolition, but in the meantime we should be wary of abetting those who aim to chip away at the legitimacy of Israel's humane response to the serious threat it now faces.

MICHAEL BALCH
Iowa City, Iowa

TO THE EDITOR:

Abraham D. Sofaer's piece is a brilliant exposition of the failings of the "road map," with one exception: his criticism of Israel's policy of destroying the homes of suicide bombers. Along with the Israel Defense Force's partial successes in interdiction, destroying the homes of suicide bombers is the only—

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albeit not foolproof—deterrent. Cement and bricks may be reclaimed and homes rebuilt, but the ripped-apart bodies of Israeli men, women, and infants can neither be reclaimed nor reconstituted.

HARRY I. GREENFIELD
Wheaton, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

Although Abraham D. Sofaer provides a fine analysis of the proposed road map for peace in the Middle East, it is naive in the extreme to believe, as he does, that Arab states would accept building permanent homes within their borders for Palestinian "refugees," no matter how great the incentive. These states—which have fought and killed Palestinians for years—support a Palestinian state only because the Palestinians will be somewhere else. To predicate a road map upon the futile hope that Arab neighbors could somehow be persuaded to accept Palestinian "refugees" is simply unrealistic.

ELLIOT MILLER
Ridgefield, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR:

Abraham D. Sofaer is correct to say that it would be "a pity" if the road map were not susceptible of renegotiation. If a plan written by outside sources is needed at all, it should at least include:

(1) *A far more significant role for Jordan.* This should not be a revival of the Jordan-is-Palestine doctrine. But does it not make sense that a West Bank Palestinian state should be in a *federation* with Jordan? This is the only way to ensure that a regional power bears some responsibility for seeing that the Palestinian leadership genuinely tries to halt terrorism.

Although the Jordanians would balk at this proposal, their nervousness would bring to light the real concerns in the Arab world about the embryonic Palestinian state. Given the ethnic makeup of Jordan, the plan might meet with success. But even if it met only with Jordanian resistance, at least one of the major roadblocks to peace in the region would lie exposed.

(2) *Israel's membership in NATO.* Israel desperately needs precisely the kind of security guarantees for which NATO, as now reconstituted, exists. Besides, Israel—unlike many NATO countries—can genuinely pull its own defensive weight and add to the strength of the alliance.

(3) *A rearrangement of relations between Syria and Lebanon.* Lebanon is a continuing threat to Israel's northern border, and Ehud Barak's clumsy attempts to resolve that problem marked the beginning of the end of the Oslo accords.

To have any reliability, a road map must take into account the Middle East's changed terrain. Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia are in a quite different relation to the United States from the one they occupied prior to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. As Mr. Sofaer points out, it would be an enormous mistake for the administration to fail to recognize this.

STEVE STEIN
Tiburon, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Abraham D. Sofaer tackles with authority and elegance the heedless assumptions and unexamined dangers that accompany the road map now being foisted upon Israel.

But one point requires emendation. Former negotiator Dennis Ross did not actually utter the words attributed to him: "the prudential issues of compliance were neglected and politicized by the Americans in favor of keeping the peace process afloat." The responsibility for this instance of what Mr. Sofaer terms "State Department doublespeak" is mine, in a lengthy interview I conducted with Mr. Ross in Melbourne for the June 2001 edition of *The Review* (www. aijac. org.au/ review/ 2001/ 266/ross. html). The statement was my own summary of Mr. Ross's account, and it was followed by a lengthy quotation from him bearing out this description.

Mr. Sofaer may have relied on an account of the interview provided by a columnist in the *Jerusalem Post* (July 11, 2001), who reproduced the quotation from my piece in such a manner as to suggest that the words were Ross's.

DANIEL MANDEL
The Review
South Melbourne, Australia

ABRAHAM D. SOFAER writes:

Uri Tadmor accuses me of "sophistry, old slogans, and arguments bordering on demagoguery," but nothing could be more sophistical than his contention that one cannot compare the right of Jews to live in Palestinian areas with that of Arabs to live in Israel—"since Arab towns in Israel are perfectly legal." That is precisely my point. Israel accepts Arabs, Christian and Muslim alike. Palestinians, by contrast, do not want Jews in their midst. If Jews could, in fact, live and worship in Hebron in peace (as they did within memory), there would be no need for Israeli forces there, or for fences and secure areas. If Arabs were not killing and attempting to kill Jews in settlements, on roads, and in Israeli cities and towns, no roadblocks would exist, no delays, no restrictions on travel.

Although I have opposed the building of settlements to create a "Greater Israel," closing down Jewish settlements and forcing all Israelis back into Israel's pre-1967 borders (or even into somewhat expanded borders) would not bring peace, as Mr. Tadmor assumes. Disseminating murderous hatred of Jews, proclaiming the intention to rid "Arab lands" of Jews, insisting on a right of return that would destroy Israel as a safe home for the Jewish people—all these are expressions of a mindset that precludes lasting peace.

As for Mr. Tadmor's claim that Palestinians have as much right as Jews to return to Israel, this is demagoguery at its most irresponsible. The UN's acceptance of Israel as a Jewish state was based on a universal recognition not only of the horrendous sufferings of the Jewish people but on the legitimacy of their historic connection to the Holy Land. Arabs (and Jews) displaced by the many wars of the Middle East must be given proper compensation or other relief; but a remedy cannot be proper if implementing it causes greater injustice than it rectifies.

I believe the U.S. is correct to pursue a two-state solution. Israel is prepared

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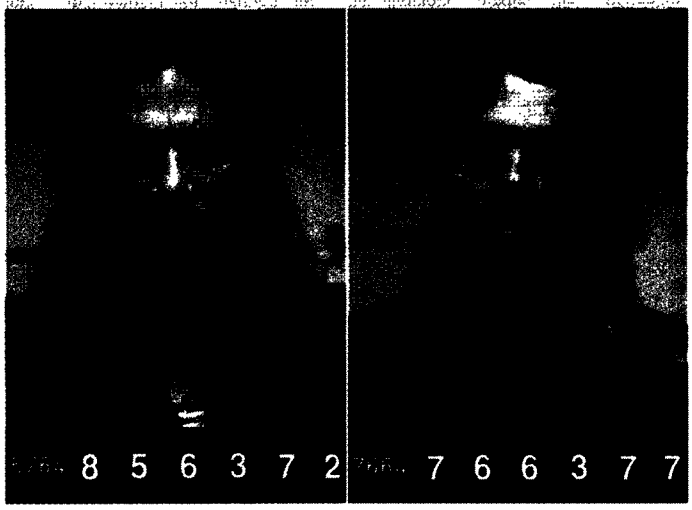

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to take the risk of accepting that outcome, on viable terms. But Palestinian terrorism, tolerated or encouraged by ineffective U.S. policies, could make it impossible. In this sense, Ben David Orlanski is wrong to say that Palestinians will escape penalty for noncompliance with the road map. Over the course of time, every Palestinian attempt to drive the Jews out of Israel has resulted in a loss of Palestinian territory or autonomy. So it will be as well in the present case. Thanks to the *intifada*, moreover, it is now inconceivable that Israel will agree to the borders that former Prime Minister Ehud Barak was prepared to accept. President Bush went to the heart of this issue when he condemned Yasir Arafat not just for what he had done to Jews but for his leadership of his own people.

Both Michael Balch and Harry I. Greenfield object to my criticism of the Israeli practice of destroying the homes of terrorist bombers. They do not argue the legality of the practice, but rather stress that Israel needs it to defend itself. I question that need, and doubt that the practice is effective; it may even be counter-productive. At the very least, I would distinguish between punishing innocent people to deter others—a fundamentally offensive act—and destroying a house whose owner is proved to have aided and abetted, or conspired with, or assisted some act of terror. In the latter instance, destroying the house may be a legitimate option, though one I would abjure.

Elliot Miller believes that Arab states will not accept Palestinian refugees or build homes for them within their borders. This cannot be proved; the U.S., for one, has never attempted to push such a policy. A recent poll showing that most Palestinians themselves would accept new homes in Palestinian territories in lieu of returning to their former homes in Israel strongly suggests that the idea is worth trying. Providing real homes for refugees, including in the Arab countries where they now reside, would be one way of helping to curb the hatred that is generated in the refugee camps.

Steve Stein calls for an enhanced role for Jordan; this may well be necessary if the Palestinians demonstrate that they cannot make peace (as Louise Weinberg concludes is already the case). At this point, however, the parties and their allies have not yet formally given up all hope of compromise, so the Jordan option is still premature. Of course I agree with Mr. Stein that Syria must be constrained; support for Hizballah by Syria (and Iran) has the potential of causing a major conflagration, and U.S. and UN policy should at some point contemplate military action to stop it if other forms of persuasion fail. (Mr. Stein's proposal that Israel join NATO is unrealistic, and in any case it would not enhance Israel's security.)

In my article I quoted Dennis Ross as admitting that under President Clinton, the U.S. had demanded Israeli concessions but failed to insist on Palestinian performance. Daniel Mandel states that the words I quoted were not actually uttered by Ross, but confirms that they accurately represent Ross's view. Either way, it was the wrong policy, and it needs to be altered. I greatly appreciate the strong agreement with this point among my correspondents.

Empty Pulpits

TO THE EDITOR:

There is no rabbi crisis. Jack Wertheimer, who has my genuine respect and with whom I generally agree, has unfortunately presented us with a flawed analysis ["The Rabbi Crisis," May]. The shortage of rabbis in my own (and Mr. Wertheimer's) Conservative movement is real and is of concern. But none of the other movements—Reconstructionist, Reform, or Orthodox—has reported a major shortage, much less a crisis.

It should be noted at the outset that the actual number of Conservative rabbis has increased year by year over the past decades. So why is there a need for more Conservative rabbis?

Because, as Mr. Wertheimer notes, even congregations of moderate size often seek to engage more than one rabbi, and congregational leadership has become more aware of the need to relate rabbinically to multiple constituencies; because there has been a large increase in the number of Jewish schools with a demand for faculty able to teach sacred texts and serve as role models; because of the growth of the Conservative movement outside North America, especially in Israel, and a call for rabbinic service in Europe, the former Soviet states, and Latin America; because the rise in the status and professionalism of the chaplaincy has encouraged rabbis to serve in hospitals, hospices, and senior residences; and, finally, because the Conservative rabbi is often sought after by Jewish communal agencies and private foundations. All of these developments speak to strengths within the Conservative rabbinate and the Jewish community. Hence, there is a shortage of our rabbis but not a crisis in the rabbinate.

Mr. Wertheimer's comment that during the 1990's, 25 to 50 percent of ordained students did not enter congregational life is not accurate. For as long as the Rabbinical Assembly has maintained records (nearly 100 years), approximately 60 percent of ordainees have entered the pulpit and 40 percent have pursued other areas of rabbinic service. Some years more ordainees enter pulpits, some years fewer do—but the ratio has remained the same.

Also puzzling is Mr. Wertheimer's insistence that the definition of the role of the congregational rabbi has changed over time and that what a congregation expects from a rabbi today is qualitatively different from what a congregation once expected. It just is not so. Congregations searching for a new rabbi, whether in 1910 or today, inevitably have desired the same qualities: a religious role model who does every possible task—teaching, preaching, administering, counseling, programming—exceptionally well, and relates to every age group. No matter how unrealistic it may be, this composite expectation is the image that congregations have always had for their rabbis.

Finally, while I agree

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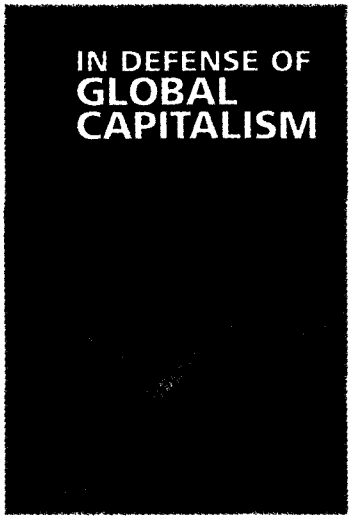

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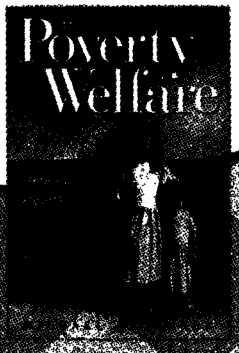

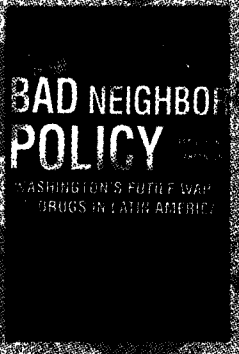

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with Mr. Wertheimer that rabbinic authority is a subject of prime importance, there are clear differences among movements that must be taken into account. Within the Conservative rabbinate, three factors contribute to the tension and concern surrounding the subject of rabbinic authority: the shift from a hierarchical to a cooperative model of leadership and religious decision-making; the availability in English of all kinds of halakhic material that unfortunately leads a religiously uneducated person to assume that by reading a single chapter he becomes an expert in interpretation of halakha who can challenge his rabbi; and (unique to the Conservative synagogue) the diversity of congregants, from those of total religious commitment to those of minimal commitment—which makes exercising rabbinic authority a more complex matter.

Mr. Wertheimer implies that one way to increase the number of individuals studying for the rabbinate is to reassert rabbinic authority. Hopefully, one is not influenced to become a rabbi because one can exercise authority. If asked why they chose the rabbinate, I believe my colleagues would respond that they did so because of a deep love for Jewish learning and the Jewish people, a desire to assure the Jewish future, and above all because they were drawn to devote their lives to further God's work. By helping people discover that commitment, we can increase the number of rabbis more than in any other way.

RABBI JOEL H. MEYERS
Executive Vice President
Rabbinical Assembly
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Since Jack Wertheimer saw fit to quote from both a document I authored ("The Rabbi-Congregation Relationship: A Vision for the 21st Century," the report of the Reconstructionist commission on the role of the rabbi) and an interview in which I was (incorrectly) quoted, I trust I may be allowed a few brief observations in response to his challenging article.

Rabbinic authority does not exist in a vacuum; in America, it is merely one more refraction of a diminution of authority that can equally be observed with regard to teachers, politicians, and physicians. Restoring old models of rabbinic authority is as unlikely to succeed as would be attempts to reinstate other earlier models of authority.

Moreover, decision-making about consequential matters has become increasingly decentralized. As my colleague Rabbi Hayim Herring points out, patients today do not merely accede to a doctor's directives—they expect to be partners in the decisions that involve their own health. We should not be surprised that individual Jews expect to be partners in the decision-making that involves their spiritual health. One does not have to celebrate this fact in order to acknowledge it, although I would like to think rabbis would welcome such engagement.

Authority cannot simply be asserted in a setting like a synagogue in which a rabbi is both leader and employee. Rabbis who assert their authority in a way that offends or alienates can expect at contract-renewal time to be unemployed.

Mr. Wertheimer misreads the Reconstructionist movement's emphasis on including Jews in the religious decision-making process (as, admittedly, do far too many Reconstructionist synagogues). Rabbis are leaders, communities need leadership, and a rabbinic voice is generally both more Jewishly informed and more influential in congregational discussions than the average congregant's. But there is nothing inconsistent in affirming a central and leading role for rabbis *along with* an affirmation of including the voices and needs of those who comprise a community. Since leadership (a more productive term than "authority") is not a limited resource, presumably there is enough to go around for rabbis and lay people alike.

Simple appeals to authority will not appeal to contemporary Jews. If we are seriously to engage Jews with Jewish tradition, we are more likely to do so by instructing rather than imposing, by educating rather than enforcing, and by provoking rather than policing. When I teach future rabbis, I try to convey one of the thoughts that inheres in Mordecai Kaplan's entire Reconstructionist enterprise: "Convince, don't coerce."

RABBI RICHARD HIRSH
Executive Director
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Wyncote, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer's article is a cogent and provocative analysis of the state of the contemporary rabbinate, but I am afraid the problem may be worse than he says, and his proposed solution difficult to achieve. Mr. Wertheimer correctly notes that rabbis themselves have participated in the "assault" on hierarchy and authority, with its problematic consequences for rabbinic work.

But this is not just a sociological matter; it is a theological one. Rabbinic authority cannot be understood as directly grounded in normative religious truths when rabbinic education and denominational ideology in the liberal movements privileges pluralism above the very concept of truth.

I refer not only to the casual acceptance of a wide variety of religious practices within the typical Reform or Conservative synagogue, but to the fact that we—rabbis educated in accredited seminaries by professors with Ph.D.'s—are trained to be attuned to the multiplicity of possible meanings that could be assigned to the Torah, Talmud, or other rabbinic text. (I wonder whether a firm believer in "Torah from heaven" would even get admitted to a Conservative, Reform, or Reconstructionist seminary.) Quite frankly, I would not know how to recognize the authoritative meaning of a given text, much less expound upon it in public.

Furthermore, it is hard to reclaim authority in one synagogue when the shul down the street makes life easier by demanding less. And since the decorum of pluralism demands that we never criticize or delegitimize another rabbi or synagogue (lest we be accused of parochial denominational politics), we do not come across as believing there is much in Judaism worth fighting for.

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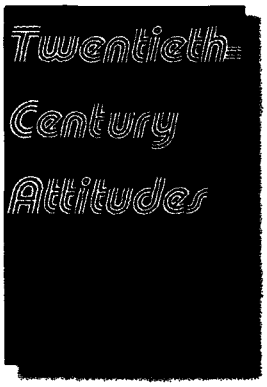

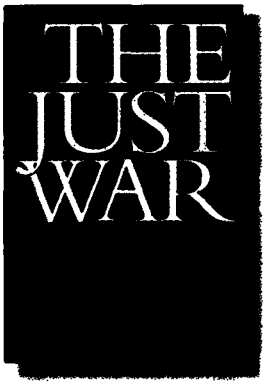

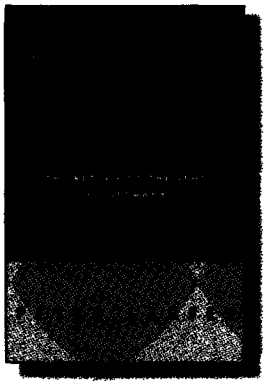

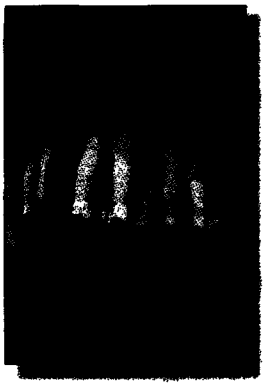

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hardly lost on our congregants, who cannot be expected to look to rabbis for halakhic or religious guidance when the source of our "authority"—sacred text—comes across as something subordinate to the perceived needs of the day. You cannot uproot the plain meaning of one verse and insist that you derive authoritative norms from the next—at least, not without a graduate-level class in denominational ideology.

The undermining of rabbinic authority, then, is not limited to synagogue governance; it is an inevitable outcome of a postmodern age that makes truth a matter of "perspective" and textual study a matter of discussing an author's "agenda."

RABBI NEAL JOSEPH LOEVINGER
Temple Israel
Swampscott, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer's important article on the "rabbi crisis" falls short in its treatment of the movements outside of Conservative Judaism. There is, today, much noteworthy fermentation and activity within the Reform movement. Ironically, this may be the result of both the anarchy that is the bedrock of Reform—whereby every rabbi is free to do as he or she wishes—and the fact that Reform has hit such a nadir that there is nowhere to go but up. On the Orthodox end of the continuum, the problem of the tail wagging the dog has never been an issue, since Orthodox rabbis, whatever their shortcomings, have few qualms about asserting their leadership and drawing clear lines in the sand. Their authority remains unquestioned.

The real problem is within Conservative Judaism, which from the outset has claimed to adhere to a halakha that is by now a distant memory for the majority of its members. The halakhic authorities of Conservative Judaism have consistently done little more than rubber-stamp as *de jure* what had already been *de facto*, from mixed-sex pews and driving on Shabbat, to the counting of females in a minyan, to ordaining women as rabbis (a monumental decision to pander to the *zeitgeist*) and—coming soon—the acceptance of homosexuality. The constant attempt to shove a square Torah into an ever-rounder hole has made Conservative Judaism a mockery of itself.

J.J. GROSS
Riverdale, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

As Jack Wertheimer notes, "Many American rabbis [have] used their pulpits as platforms for engagement with national or international causes," but he fails to develop the point. In fact, the politicization of the non-Orthodox rabbinate lies at the heart of the rabbinical malaise. The great majority of non-Orthodox rabbis are, and for at least the last 40 years have been, little more than leftist political activists.

Mr. Wertheimer mentions one rabbi who, while admitting he does not teach Torah, still seems focused on trying to convey some spirituality to his congregants. Even such a rabbi is more beneficial than the run of the rabbinical herd, who are as bereft of spirituality as they are of Jewish substance, and who offer only a soulless, secular political correctness.

A more searching examination of the "rabbi crisis" would have asked what impact our politicized rabbinate has had on the disproportionately large number of Jews who have sought spiritual and emotional satisfaction in cults; also, to what degree our politicized rabbinate has contributed to the rise of a Jewish demographic mainstream that consists so largely of terminally assimilated, universalistic liberals.

BRUCE J. SCHNEIDER
Irvine, California

TO THE EDITOR:

The crisis in the rabbinate described by Jack Wertheimer is nothing less than a crisis in *kedusha*, holiness. At risk is any kind of sacred depth or purpose.

Nowhere is this scandal of the holy more evident than in rabbinic evaluation. As the Reform movement has made clear, such evaluations should emerge from clearly defined goals. But much of what a rabbi does is hidden from the eye and cannot be evaluated, at least by human interlocutors. There is simply no way to measure the power of moments that save people from suicide, give meaning to the dying, or profoundly shape a young life—or to gauge the influence of a carefully crafted word that raises a congregation to moral integrity. Blessed are those lay leaders who know that you cannot judge an I-Thou profession (as Martin Buber might have put it) by the criteria of the I-It.

I fear that some of my colleagues are at least partially responsible for our profession's failings. We are increasingly and vocally zealous about maintaining our personal time. We do not read books. We are afraid to take unpopular stands, forgetting that Zionism and civil rights were once the provinces of fearless pulpit voices. Our people want connection to texts and to values. They have the right to expect it—to expect their rabbis to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

RABBI JEFFREY K. SALKIN
The Temple
Atlanta, Georgia

TO THE EDITOR:

Once again Jack Wertheimer has cogently and perceptively addressed the reality of American Jewish religious life. But his conclusion that rabbis themselves can "turn this around" by the adoption of "more proactive postures," the "reassertion" of "their authoritative role," and the "reeducation" of "their congregants to think beyond their immediate personal needs, their inchoate yearnings for 'spirituality' and their consumerist notions of religious life" is remarkably sanguine.

The consumerist culture and its obsession with entitlements have bred a personality type known as the pathological antagonist, or "clergy-killer." These are vicious, unusually duplicitous people who see clergy as the legitimate object of derision and public attack. Every church or synagogue has one or two, and some have many more than their share. Thriving on compliant synagogue leadership, they induce intense institutional and personal stress and cause serious damage.

Is it any wonder that our

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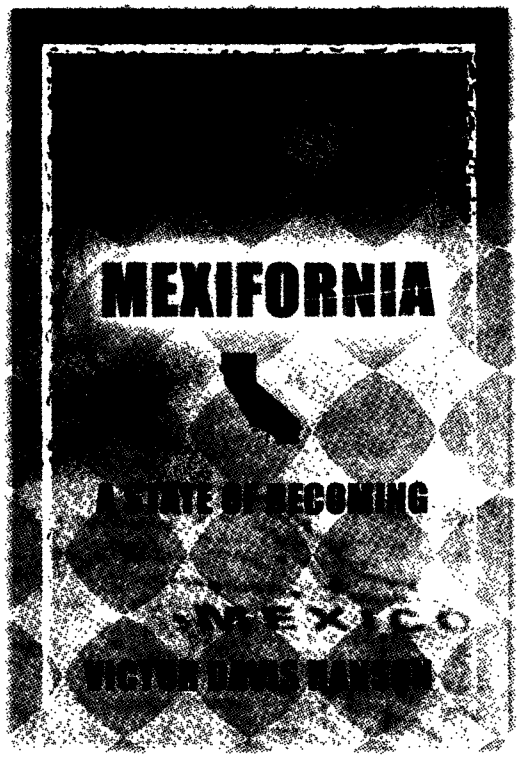

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"Among the values that Mr. Hanson regards as especially important: speak English; don't disparage the race or ethnicity of others but don't demand anything because of your race or ethnicity either; don't break the law; don't view working hard and studying hard as "acting white"; and be proud of being an American."

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seminarians are seeking to avoid being placed in pulpits?

RABBI CLIFFORD E. LIBRACH
United Jewish Center
Danbury, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer's timely analysis of the shortage of pulpit rabbis for small and medium-sized congregations in America's hinterland invites elaboration. For Conservative Judaism, with which I am most familiar, several problems need particular attention.

First, it is time to assess the career path of present and future women rabbis. Nearly a generation after the initial ordination of women for the Conservative rabbinate, alarmingly few female candidates under forty serve for substantial periods of time in congregational careers. Sexist biases in hiring practices, as well as perceived incompatibilities between motherhood and the pulpit, must be addressed.

Complex family issues also work against choosing rabbinic careers in the small congregations of America's interior. My contemporaries at the seminary generally married Jewish women willing to subordinate their own career choices and approaches to Judaism to the needs of a rabbinic career. Today's rabbinic households are structured around two careers, often limited to urban areas that offer day-school education at both the primary and secondary levels. The spouses of recent rabbinic graduates consciously seek to avoid any expectations that might be placed upon them by congregations. Again, we must find ways to balance these family concerns with pulpit careers.

A further problem is the post-denominationalism prevalent in the current student body. Students in the Conservative movement often marry individuals devoted to other approaches to Judaism, notably rabbis or rabbinical students from other movements. These ideologically diverse households try to avoid public scrutiny that would hold them up as role models. They seek rabbinic service in communal life apart from what they regard as the parochial nature of the Conservative movement. These students frequently view themselves as part of an amorphous "liberal Judaism" that encompasses all non-Orthodox streams. The Conservative rabbinate needs to find techniques to train students to be passionate Conservative Jews.

RABBI ALAN SILVERSTEIN
President
World Council of Conservative Synagogues
Caldwell, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer's explanation of the current state of affairs in the rabbinate is predictably solid. But his summary conclusions leave us merely with some hopeful remarks about a possible turnaround, banking on the ability of future rabbis "to take their own role seriously, accepting the burden and the challenge of their calling." Surely Mr. Wertheimer, as provost of the Jewish Theological Seminary, has had earnest discussions on these subjects with his colleagues there, and they must have developed some contingency plans for programs to deal with the "rabbi crisis." It would have been of considerable interest to readers to hear about such discussions and the recommendations that resulted.

RABBI HERBERT ROSENBLUM
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

JACK WERTHEIMER writes:

If some of my critics contend that I have fabricated a nonexistent crisis, others believe that I am too "sanguine" and that the "problem may be worse" than I say. I think I was right in the first place: the crisis is real, but there are grounds for hope.

Rabbi Joel H. Meyers acknowledges a shortage in the Conservative rabbinate but not elsewhere. Two years ago, however, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, the president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the highest-ranking leader of Reform Judaism, declared the shortage in his movement "the most serious issue facing Reform rabbis now" and, to his credit, went on to create a partnership of rabbis and congregations to address it.

The Reform movement, *pace* Rabbi Herbert Rosenblum, also understands that this crisis is not a problem for any single seminary to resolve by itself. Rather, it needs the coordinated efforts of all denominational bodies. Nor, for that matter, is the problem limited to rabbis. As some far-sighted philanthropists are beginning to understand, a larger personnel crisis—of educators, communal workers, and the like—besets American Jewish institutional life, and dealing with it is similarly a job for all.

Are Orthodox congregations a separate world unto themselves, as several of my correspondents seem to believe? It is true that the Orthodox community produces large numbers of rabbis, but one important sector within it—"modern" Orthodoxy—relies increasingly on rabbis who have been trained elsewhere than at its flagship institution of Yeshiva University. I suspect this is due not only to shifting ideological currents within the modern-Orthodox orbit but also to Yeshiva's inability to produce a sufficient number of qualified rabbis who are interested specifically in pulpit careers. The dean of Yeshiva's rabbinical school admitted as much two years ago.

Other correspondents manifest different concerns. Bruce J. Schneider attributes the "rabbinical malaise" to "the politicization of the non-Orthodox rabbis." I sympathize with Mr. Schneider's dismay over the positions espoused by some non-Orthodox rabbis, but a surfeit of political involvement is not the primary source of the "malaise" I was discussing. Nor is he correct to assume that Orthodox rabbis stay out of politics, whether the issue is the "Who is a Jew" controversy that has rocked Israeli and American Orthodox circles for over twenty years, the efforts of some hasidic and *haredi* rabbis to deliver bloc votes, or the pronouncements of Orthodox rabbis on the Arab-Israeli peace process or on domestic-policy matters like faith-based initiatives, school vouchers, and the like.

J.J. Gross takes the occasion of his letter to lambaste Conservative and Reform Judaism on matters far removed from my article. But I was particularly struck by his sweeping assertion that

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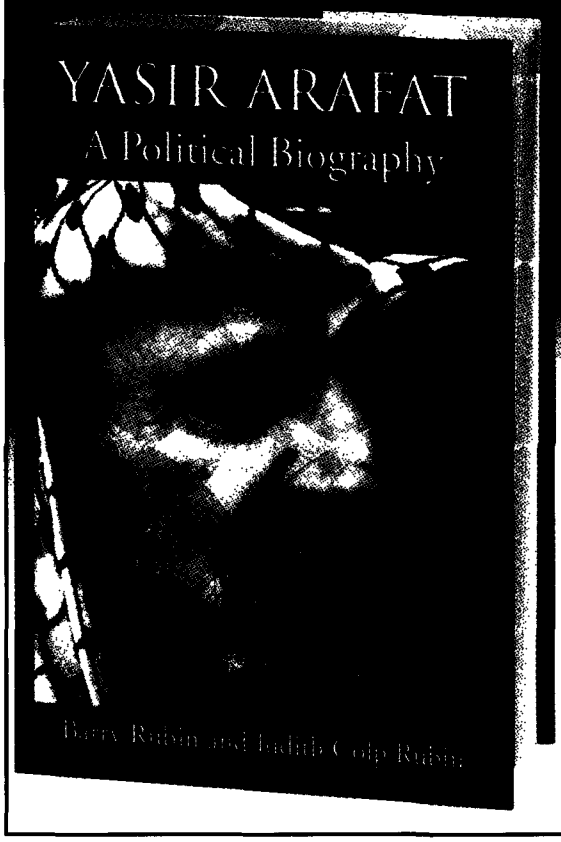

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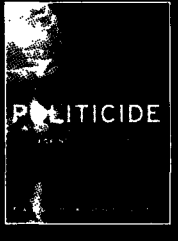

POLITICIDE
Ariel Sharon's War Against the Palestinians
BARUCH KIMMERLING

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Orthodox rabbis enjoy "unquestioned" authority, an assessment that would surely come as a surprise to many of them. In Mr. Gross's own community of Riverdale, New York, the rabbi of the largest Orthodox synagogue was publicly challenged a few years ago by congregants who disagreed with his lenient ruling on a matter of synagogue ritual; ultimately, the rabbi was forced to back down. For a pithier and more accurate view of the situation than Mr. Gross's, here are the words of the past executive of the Orthodox Union on the lot of rabbis within his world: "It is a pressure-packed position."

According to Rabbi Richard Hirsh, I have "misread" his movement's emphasis on "including Jews in the religious decision-making process." But he concedes that "far too many Reconstructionist synagogues" have likewise "misread" that process. If things are not working out on the ground the way he would like, perhaps that is because lines of authority and responsibility are so vaguely defined. In other words, perhaps I and many Reconstructionist synagogues have read the situation correctly.

I am particularly grateful to Rabbis Meyers, Loevinger, Salkin, Librach, and Silverstein for adding important nuances to the discussion. Their letters illustrate the multiple ways in which the relationship between rabbis and their congregants, especially their boards, has deteriorated. Rabbi Meyers may be correct that congregants have long expected their rabbis to do "everything," but that the number of tasks has multiplied out of all proportion is evident in contracts listing page upon page of "performance expectations." Moreover, as boards increasingly adopt corporate models, synagogue members come to judge their rabbi not for excellence as a teacher and religious role model but for efficiency as a CEO.

Finally, as Rabbis Salkin and Librach observe, an improvement in the condition of the rabbinate will depend upon actions taken by rabbis themselves and their congregations. In my article I emphasized the need for rabbis to reassert their authority. Even though their job security is in the hands of their congregants, it is for them to point the path. Congregational leaders, who have their own responsibilities, must begin by respecting the prerogatives of the rabbi in the religious sphere.

Paradoxically, the declining pool of rabbis may aid in this process, as congregations discover that judging their rabbis primarily by the bottom line and viewing them as easily replaceable employees are recipes for perpetuating today's critical shortages. In this sense, at least, I am indeed sanguine about the possibility of improvement.

Staying Put

TO THE EDITOR:

Frederick W. Kagan's argument that America should continue to maintain 60,000 troops in Germany rests on at least two questionable assumptions: that relations between the United States and Germany are bound to improve over the long term, and that the presence of U.S. troops will assist in the process ["Why Our Troops Should Stay in 'Old Europe,'" May].

But Mr. Kagan offers little evidence for either premise. The presence of these troops—and many more in prior decades—did little to stem anti-American feeling in Germany, and arguably exacerbated it. In any event, it is hard to believe that 60,000 Americans living in self-contained military posts can much influence attitudes in a nation of over 80 million.

If relations with Germany do not improve, or worsen, the U.S. troops based there may become hostage to an unfriendly regime or populace, making their proximity to the Balkans and the Middle East meaningless. I do not mean to suggest that the German government would take hostile measures against our troops, but simply that Germans in and out of government could make staging troops from Germany problematic. The government could restrict the use of airbases or flyover rights (France has done this in the past). As for movement to ports of embarkation, that is dependent on access to road and rail. Any GI who has traveled on a troop train in Germany knows about the seemingly endless delays German rail officials can place on military transport. Unsympathetic Bundesbahn officials could make matters worse. Even if the German government did not actively interfere with deployments, protesters could block tracks or otherwise impede the movement of American troops.

I like having American troops in Germany, but not because of their easy deployability elsewhere. In case Mr. Kagan is wrong about our future in Germany, moving a division and some air assets to bases in Eastern Europe is a good way to hedge our bets.

JONATHAN F. KEILER
Bowie, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

I agree with Fredrick W. Kagan that Germany remains "one of the linchpins of Europe" and a "keystone of NATO." It would make no sense to remove our troops from Germany as punishment for the German government's behavior on the issue of Iraq. It would likely encourage the very tendencies and behaviors we wish to discourage: what the French call Gaullism and child psychologists call "oppositional defiance." How to encourage tendencies that coincide with American interests—and whether NATO remains the right instrument to help—are other questions.

Still, Mr. Kagan offers two contradictory characterizations of the political future of "Old Europe." "It may be," he writes, "that the current obstructionist program will not outlast the Schroeder government." But he also writes: "Powerful elements in Germany and France are making a bid to form an independent Europe under the control of their two countries." I fear the second trend is the more powerful. The virtues of "multipolarism" are conventional wisdom in Berlin across the political spectrum. There is endless frustration with, and envy and resentment of, American power. One finds no takers here for a NATO whose purpose is to discourage, as Mr. Kagan

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puts it, "the development of a Europe over whose policies we have no control." Indeed, his article is certain to be circulated in Berlin's ministries with this phrase highlighted as proof of American hegemonic designs.

What to do? Mr. Kagan makes a cogent case for holding steady. A former Reagan administration official said to me a couple of years ago, "Let's not keep our troops in Germany so long that the Germans resentfully ask for them to leave." That day may be closer than we think.

JEFFREY GEDMIN
Aspen Institute
Berlin, Germany

FREDERICK W. KAGAN writes:

The U.S. must decide what it wants to happen in U.S.-German relations, and then act in ways that support that goal. In the current international climate, removing our forces from Germany or even substantially reducing them would send the message that America is exacting retribution for Germany's policies before and during the recent Gulf War. Such an action would undermine prospects for restoring good U.S.-German relations. Is that what we want to do?

It is not contradictory to note that, on the one hand, the current German government seems to have been seeking to establish multipolarity and that, on the other hand, its hold on power appears to be shaky. There is no doubt that many in Germany and elsewhere in Europe see the U.S. with "envy and resentment" and frustration; it is even possible that policies informed by those resentments will come to dominate. The question remains, what does the U.S. want and how should we go about getting it? In my view, the game in Europe is still very much in play, and, whatever the short-term trends may be, the longer-term future is far from clear. By pulling forces out of "old Europe," we help the Europeans choose the path of confrontation. That is unwise.

Jonathan F. Keiler fears that the Germans might some day refuse to allow us to deploy troops from German bases. That is extremely unlikely. The French case is not really a precedent here. It is true that France refused to allow us to fly F-111's through its airspace to attack Libya; that decision, although it strained Franco-American relations, did not destroy them because there were other ways to accomplish the mission—and because the planes were not based in France. For the Germans to disallow us the use of our own troops stationed in German bases would be a hostile act that would instantly destroy our relationship. A German government willing to take such a step would almost certainly have evicted us long since.

A more serious problem is the continuing idealization of the Eastern European alternative. Governments in those countries are less stable than most of their "old European" counterparts; as these young democracies mature, it is unclear what direction their policies will ultimately take. Their friendliness today is no more necessarily a permanent feature of European politics than is the present hostility of Germany. The bureaucracies in these countries, moreover, are fully as capable of imposing delays (intentionally or unintentionally) as are the Germans.

Jeffrey Gedmin warns, finally, that the day may be closer than we imagine when the Germans will throw the U.S. out. He may be right. If it happened, however, it would be a catastrophe for NATO and for American policy. That is still another reason why we should do nothing to make it easier—such as by beginning a process of withdrawal on our own or by indicating that the deployment of American troops in Germany is no longer important to us.

Sondheim

TO THE EDITOR:

As the author of a forthcoming book on Stephen Sondheim, *How Sondheim Found His Sound*, I hate to quibble with Terry Teachout's ringing endorsement of the composer ["Sondheim's Operas," May]. But may I offer two corrections and an observation?

First, it was not *Sweeney Todd* (1979)—as Mr. Teachout has it—but *Pacific Overtures* (1976) that followed *A Little Night Music* (1973).

Second, contrary to Mr. Teachout's implication, Sondheim had known about both *Sweeney Todd* and the horror plays of Paris's Théâtre du Grand Guignol before he first saw Christopher Bond's adaptation of the melodrama in 1974. Having been bored by most versions of *Sweeney Todd* and Grand Guignol, he found Bond's adaptation electrifying.

Finally, Sondheim himself would no doubt argue with Mr. Teachout's claim that *Sweeney Todd* is "the most successful of all American operas, better than . . . [George Gershwin's] *Porgy and Bess*." On more than one occasion, Sondheim has named Gershwin's piece as his all-time favorite work, saying, "I've always wished that I had written it." His second-favorite: *Sweeney Todd*.

STEVE SWAYNE
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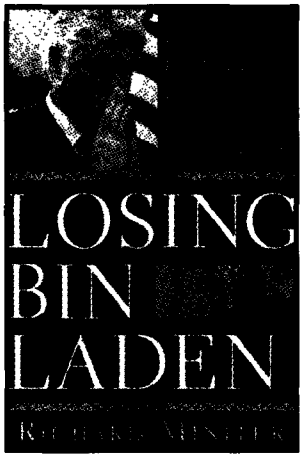

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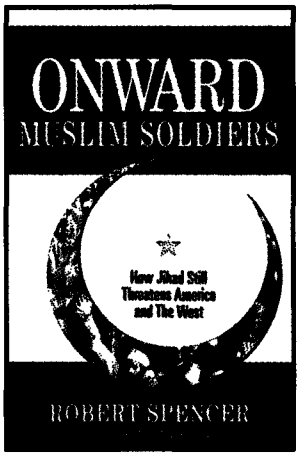

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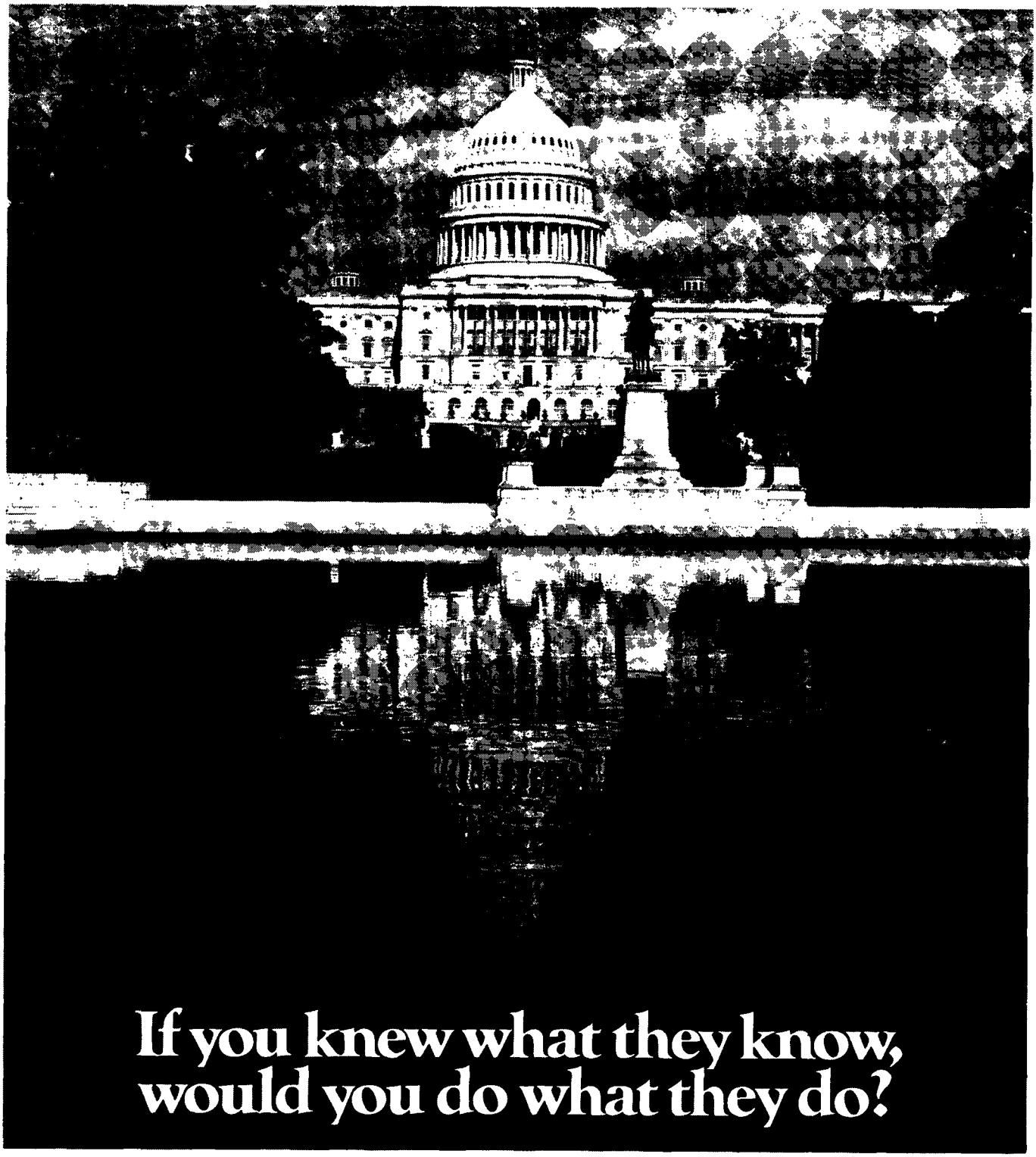

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Commentary
September 2003

Hong Kong and the Future of Freedom

Arthur Waldron

FOR MOST of the six years since its return to Chinese control in 1997 under the rubric of "One Country, Two Systems," Hong Kong has served as perhaps the single most important piece of evidence for three fundamental assumptions underlying our policy toward the People's Republic of China (PRC). The first of these is that the government in Beijing is not so much ideological as pragmatic and flexible: hence its willingness to grant at least a semblance of self-government to Hong Kong, now a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic. The second is that the liberality displayed toward Hong Kong is a signal of the longer-term course that the Beijing leadership has set for China as a whole: toward more openness and increased political as well as economic freedom. The final assumption is that the reasonableness Beijing has demonstrated in Hong Kong will eventually persuade the people of Taiwan to adopt a similar model, and enter China at no cost to their democracy or freedom but with great benefit to the trust and cordiality of the relationship between Beijing and Washington.

These comfortable assumptions look to have been completely overturned by the mass pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong in July. The full consequences of those events have yet to be felt, but there can be no doubt that they have launched not only Hong Kong and China but also the United States and other interested parties into deep waters. Abundant storm signals notwithstanding, most commentators and government officials around the world were caught by surprise as the crisis burst, both so suddenly and with such great force.

What astonished everyone, participants and opponents alike, on Tuesday, July 1—the sixth anniversary, to the day, of Hong Kong's "peaceful return to the Motherland"—was the enormous *number* of people who turned out for what had looked to be a rather routine and inconsequential protest against a proposed law. This was the so-called Article 23, a security law for Hong Kong that, among other provisions, would have allowed searches without warrants; long prison terms for the disclosure, for instance by journalists, of so-called state secrets (in China, economic data can be thus classified); and the banning in Hong Kong of groups banned in China—such as the China Democratic party, or the Falungong religion, or, for that matter, the Roman Catholic Church.

In the weeks and months prior to July 1 there had been some agitation against Article 23 by democratic activists in Hong Kong, but the proposed law was nevertheless expected easily to pass the legislative council (where only 24 of 60 seats are currently elected), as scheduled, on July 9. Was it not the case, after all, that Asians, unlike Westerners, cared more for stability than for liberty? In the widely accepted

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cliché, as paraphrased by the last British governor, Christopher Patten, the Hong Kong Chinese were "politically apathetic, ignorant and uncaring about politics and government, leaving it to a tiny elite and the civil servants to govern" as they pursued their exclusively economic interests.

THAT SOMETHING was fundamentally wrong with this idea had become clear by mid-afternoon on July 1. Instead of the 30,000 to 50,000 demonstrators that the Beijing-appointed chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, had told his masters to expect, or even the 100,000 that the organizers had sometimes dreamed of, fully a half-million residents turned out. Braving blistering sun and temperatures in the 90's, they demonstrated for six-and-a-half hours, demanding that Article 23 be withdrawn and effectively shutting down the city into the bargain. Many would-be protesters never managed to join the crowd, as public transportation was totally overwhelmed.

The chief executive watched the proceedings on television—in China proper, CNN feeds of the events had been cut—and confessed they gave him "a sleepless night." Pro-Beijing commentators made a show of attributing the spectacle to material factors, which was partly correct: unemployment in Hong Kong is at an unheard-of 8.6 percent, and property values have been falling steadily. But the demonstrators themselves, when asked, stoutly refuted such condescending assessments. Speaking of her children, a Hong Kong woman married to an American put it this way: "Three days before American Independence Day, I took them to march with me to show them that the half of their heritage that is Chinese cares as much about liberty and human dignity as the half that is American—and what patriotism and love of country really mean."

Lest anyone doubt that this was what the half-million had turned out to assert, two more mass demonstrations followed. On July 9, an estimated 50,000 protesters packed the surrounding precincts of the British-era legislative assembly. Three days later, 20,000 gathered again, demanding free elections to choose the entire legislature as well as the chief executive (who is currently "elected" by an assembly of 800 carefully chosen pro-Beijing nominators).

For both Beijing and the appointed Hong Kong government, there could be no question: these stunning events represented a "people power" challenge as great as the vast pro-democracy uprising that had swept China itself in 1989. The fearless Roman Catholic bishop of the territory, Joseph Zen, summed up the issue very aptly in speaking to the final demonstration: "Hong Kong people are intelligent and civilized," he said, "but we still can't be masters of our own." The same is true, he might have added, for the people of China itself.

What the long-term response will be to this deep and fundamental challenge is a subject to which I shall return. In the short term, a kind of stalemate has emerged. The Hong Kong government salvaged the immediate situation by removing from Article 23 several of its most odious provisions and then, when that failed to quell public outrage, by deferring legislative consideration of it until later this autumn. In the meantime, on the bedrock demand for democracy, the Hong Kong administration yielded nothing, offering only a vague promise of "consultations" about political and constitutional matters. In 2004 or 2005, it suggested, there might be an opportunity to prepare legislation for 2006, which would in turn prepare for the elections scheduled for 2007. The word "democracy" itself was scrupulously avoided.

BUYING TIME, in short, is the order of the moment. And that is understandable enough. For, in truth, Beijing's choices are quite constricted. To begin with, there is the Basic Law—a set of rules for Hong Kong, passed by China's own parliament, which greatly constrain the PRC's freedom of action (unless Beijing recklessly decides to tear it up). Nor is a military solution in the cards, *à la* Tiananmen Square in 1989. Although there are Chinese troops in the SAR—no one who saw the handover in 1997 will forget the first several hours of television coverage, when column after column of military vehicles entered the city as impassive residents watched and the rain fell in torrents—there are not enough of them to cow a territory of seven million inhabitants. Nor does anyone in the Beijing leadership have the personal standing, or perhaps the courage, to order such a thing.

In 1989, moreover, it was mostly Hong Kong money that rescued the PRC, then under brief sanction by most Western countries. Today, what might be called "Greater Hong Kong"—the SAR proper and the neighboring province of Guangdong—is the richest, fastest-growing, most technically advanced, and freest part of the People's Republic of China. Its combined GDP of a little over $300 billion accounts for more than 20 percent of the country's entire gross domestic product. Hong Kong's investors bankroll and administer between 60 and 80 percent of all foreign-invested enterprises in China, as well as disproportionately large

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amounts of high-technology investment and foreign trade. To damage Hong Kong would thus be to damage the cornerstone of the economic edifice that is today's China.

At least some leaders in China seem to have taken in these realities, and even to understand that further reform, of *some* kind, is the only way to mitigate the Hong Kong crisis. One of them, State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan, has stated that "There will be economic, political reforms and other reforms to improve the livelihood of the people." Another, a top Chinese trade official, has ventured that "any method of expression, so long as it is allowed under the law, deserves to be taken seriously."

Most intriguing of all is China's premier, Wen Jiabao. In 1989, Wen accompanied the former Communist-party chief Zhao Ziyang on a sympathetic visit to the students in Tiananmen Square shortly before the hardliners opted for bloody suppression. (Zhao, purged after the massacre, reportedly still lives in Beijing under house arrest.) This year, Wen made a highly successful trip to Hong Kong on the eve of the first protest (he departed on the morning of July 1). His personal agents are said to be in the territory, quietly talking to people of every shade of opinion.

What we may be witnessing in these gropings is a tentative resuscitation of the once-numerous liberal wing of the Chinese Communist party, with Hong Kong seen by them as the ideal environment—ideal because contained—in which to experiment with genuine political reform. This is not a romantic fantasy. The suppression of 1989 was widely opposed at the highest levels of both party and army; authorization for it came ultimately from only one man, Deng Xiaoping, China's last strong man. Would it be too much to expect Hong Kong to become a test-bed for greater political participation? After all, some in the party would argue, we are going to have to make genuine political reforms sooner or later, just as we made economic reforms. We began the latter in a few small, special zones near Hong Kong. Where shall we test political reforms? Why not in Hong Kong itself?

But of course this is anathema to other powerful figures. Both Premier Wen Jiabao and President Hu Jintao, their hold on the reins of government tenuous at best, face an entrenched opposition led by China's former president, Jiang Zemin, whose ambitious followers in the "Shanghai group" have effectively run China since they were installed by Deng after the 1989 massacre. We may be certain that these men see nothing in China's future but more Communist dictatorship. Had they felt otherwise, they would surely have managed to make a start at reform during the fourteen years they held uncontested power.

Because of this powerful opposition, real reform looks to be a difficult sell in Beijing. Instead, we can expect still more extemporized half-measures, designed simultaneously to quash the emergence of a full-fledged democracy movement, restore the central government's slipping authority, and avoid arousing too much protest or unfavorable publicity.

One such palliative half-measure might be to fire the unpopular chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa; but that is unlikely to happen. Although he is a poor administrator and has earned deep disfavor in Hong Kong, he is also the man personally chosen for his job by Jiang Zemin. The current leaders in Beijing, who came of political age during the all-out power struggles of the Cultural Revolution, are in no mood to precipitate another such struggle by taking on Jiang's faction so nakedly.

Tung will probably stay in office, then, albeit with some attractive new ministers by his side. No doubt, he will attempt both to carry out instructions from Beijing and somehow win over the population that has been entrusted to him. These he will try to bribe by means of economic "pump priming" and devices to prop up the housing market. He may even undertake carefully supervised walkabouts in actual Hong Kong neighborhoods, and give from-the-heart interviews to foreign media. All the while, he will try to intimidate—not directly, given the population's hair-trigger sensitivity to any threat to existing civil liberties, but by using his patronage powers to shower favors on those who support him while making life as difficult as possible for his opponents.

There may be other half-measures as well, including much playing of the "patriotism" card. As in the aftermath of the 1989 massacre in China, this would feature official stress on the greatness of the Chinese race and the achievements of Chinese civilization, as well as on the innumerable insults China has endured from foreigners and the consequent need to pursue national glory—with democrats labeled "anti-Chinese." Whether this goes down well with the Hong Kong Chinese—patriots, certainly, but likely to find the manipulative northern style alien and irritating—is another question.

In any case, half-measures, even taken together, do not add up to a solution. Nobody will be fooled by payoffs and flag raisings. Public opinion will not change. And within a matter of months the crisis is certain to begin again. For Beijing has insisted on

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reintroducing the security bill as scheduled, and evidently thinks it can be passed.

President Hu Jintao has predicted that, "after undergoing earnest, extensive consultations," the slightly revised law "will certainly win the understanding, support, and agreement of the Hong Kong compatriots." We already know, however, what the Hong Kong compatriots think. If the bill does pass, it will not be with their support and agreement but because Beijing will have called in every chit, twisted every arm, and bribed every legislator it could find and because the Hong Kong government will have undertaken a full-court press to ram it through.

And then what? If the bill passes, the government will presumably want to enforce it. Why take the SAR to the brink of a political precipice to establish provisions that are never used? Making a public example of some dissident figure would be one obvious way to show the new dispensation with respect to political activity. In Chinese this is called killing the chicken to frighten the monkey.

Yet any attempt actually to arrest a prominent Hong Kong democrat, or shut down a newspaper, will almost certainly fail to intimidate the people of Hong Kong. Instead, it is likely to lead to further unrest and, especially, to the emigration of many who can take their capital with them. Threaten the wildly popular anti-Communist *Apple Daily*, or attack Bishop Zen (already being done), or close down popular radio talk shows, and you risk destroying Hong Kong itself.

Nor is that all. The Basic Law provides that, in the legislative elections to be held next year, the number of democratically chosen seats will rise from the current 24 to 30, exactly half the total. If the government does push the security bill through, an angry populace may punish it next year by promptly filling those seats with democrats. If that prospect is not troubling enough to Beijing, Hong Kong democrats have in the past won some of the remaining 30 seats as well (these are chosen by "functional constituencies"). If they win some again, the possibility looms of an anti-administration majority, capable of halting all government initiatives.

Alternatively, what if the bill should fail—despite the "earnest consultations," the bribes, and the threats? After all, it failed to pass in July even though the pro-Beijing forces in the legislative council in theory enjoyed a reliable 36-to-24 majority. Such a failure, by demonstrating the impotence of the government, would create as many problems as would success.

This, in a nutshell, is China's dilemma: damned if it does, damned if it doesn't.

WHATEVER DIRECTION the Hong Kong crisis takes, it will continue to reveal what may be called, in this post-strong-man era, the Wizard of Oz aspect of political control in China. The past 30 years have shown what masters of prevarication and illusion are China's Communist leaders. Their greatest triumph has lain in their ability to convince the world, and many of their own people, that ever since the 1970's they have been in the process of doing, or about to begin to do, things which, if they actually did them, would spell their own demise: freeing the press, reforming the banks and state-owned enterprises, developing a legal system, above all engaging in political reform. But limits exist even to China's ability to postpone and to the rest of the world's willingness to believe, and the Hong Kong crisis has brought those limits out into the open.

Quite unexpectedly, the Beijing government has been forced to fish or cut bait. Hong Kong will either be democratized, as public opinion overwhelmingly demands and as even the Basic Law strongly suggests it eventually will be, or it will not. No merely tactical solution exists. The problems in both China and Hong Kong are like the cracks in the Three Gorges Dam, structural defects that cannot simply be plastered over.

In fact, the Basic Law—Hong Kong's constitution—is itself unworkable. It gives the people the freedom to speak out and to elect representatives, but denies those representatives the possibility of ever forming a government. The chief executive, chosen by Beijing in the manner I have indicated, is responsible not to the people he rules but to the Beijing government that rules him. Only full democratization—or full dictatorship—can restore something like equilibrium, and each has its perils.

The same applies, mutatis mutandis, to China itself. If Beijing vetoes democracy in Hong Kong, it will have reneged on an implied promise that has been fundamental not only to its role in the SAR but also to its approach to the rest of the world. Failure to deliver on the hopes and promises of 1997, so warmly welcomed at the time, will gut the credibility of *any* Chinese promise—and this at a time when Beijing is increasingly signing international agreements, the World Trade Organization agreement being perhaps the most important recent example.

Such a veto will also eliminate any possibility that the people of Taiwan would voluntarily agree to join the People's Republic of China. The island's elected president, Chen Shuibian, spoke out early on in support of the democratic movement in Hong Kong,

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and one of his top advisers participated in a teleconference that featured the Hong Kong democrat Emily Lau. Nor does the opposition Kuomintang party's position differ all that much.

But now suppose instead that Beijing sets Hong Kong on the course of steady liberalization, culminating in full democracy as was suggested in 1994; and suppose that, in 2007, Hong Kong popularly elects a legislative council and a chief executive. The United States, Britain, and other international powers have already called for just such an outcome. They may be right do so, but do they fully grasp what an earthquake it will entail for all of China, and what it will do to the "stability" they prize so dearly?

Free elections in Hong Kong will produce a leader, having a mandate of unimpeachable legitimacy, conferred by several million voters, in China's most advanced and economically important region. He (or she: Anson Chan, the distinguished civil servant, might well win such a free election) will be uncontrollable, at least by the Beijing leadership, itself elected by zero voters. That alone is sure to have a profound repercussion among the people of the PRC. If Beijing is perceived to have yielded democracy to Hong Kong because of popular pressure, it will prove to the Chinese people that although the Communists are incapable of initiating change on their own, the party has nevertheless become weak enough to be pushed in that direction. And it will be asked: if the people of Hong Kong, who lived uncomplainingly under British colonial rule for more than a century, can elect their own leadership, then why cannot we—the good loyal Chinese people of Shanghai or Tianjin or Wuhan or Beijing—do the same?

Things will only get messier if the party tries to hold on by force—assuming anyone in the leadership has the stomach to use violence. As for what happens after that, we have seen the dynamic before—in Russia, where Mikhail Gorbachev (who, good Communist that he was, had ensured that his job as president of the USSR would remain appointive) faced Boris Yeltsin (who had won election as president of Russia). Gorbachev lost. At a similar point, China will enter the maelstrom, and we can only hope it emerges half so well.

HOW WILL all this affect the United States? Obviously, if China ends up repressing Hong Kong enough to end the fiction of "One Country, Two Systems," we will no longer be able to treat Hong Kong, as we have done up till now, as if it were a separate, "free" entity, having its own customs, law, border controls, and so forth. Henceforth, we will be effectively dealing with one system. That will hurt alike the economies of Hong Kong, China, and the United States, whose total trade is massive. Our scenario for Taiwan's joining China in a way similar to Hong Kong will also be rendered completely implausible, and we will have to start considering seriously the question of the island's future international status and security.

Questions will also be raised about Beijing's medium- to longer-term intentions. Any official map of the Asian region published in China shows large amounts of territory, notably in the South China Sea, claimed by Beijing but not in fact under its control. Up to now it has been easy to shrug off these claims as artifacts of a bygone political era, soon to be rendered moot as Beijing liberalizes and grasps the lesson that negotiation, and not force, is the way to real international stature. Hong Kong mishandled will be a chilling piece of contrary evidence, one that will have to be carefully weighed in light of another such piece of evidence, namely, the costly and ambitious military buildup in which China is currently engaged. Could it be that the rulers in Beijing are *not* the economically oriented pragmatists we have taken them for?

Which brings us back a final time to democratization, whether initiated by a more liberal regime or by popular pressure, or both. This is, as I have noted, a prospect no less fraught with danger, and no less subversive of our prevailing assumptions. But it is also, needless to say, potentially far more hopeful for the people of China and the world. Elsewhere I have sketched out several scenarios for such a future, and we need not rehearse them here.* As far as U.S. policy is concerned, the point is that, by insistently betting on the Communist regime, and declining to consider the terrible difficulties with which it is beset, we have systematically robbed ourselves of the ability to influence the course of events in accordance with our interests and our values—and time has at last caught up with us.

Events, indeed, are already in the saddle. Beijing must either go with the people of Hong Kong, or oppose them. Fudging is impossible. And fudging is now likewise impossible for us. Most media coverage of the present crisis has given the impression that what is at issue here is the future of Hong Kong. That is incorrect. What is really at issue is the future of China and, by direct implication, the future of freedom. And that, above all, is why Hong Kong is so important.

* See my article, "A Free and Democratic China?," in the November 2000 COMMENTARY.

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The Neoconservative Cabal

Joshua Muravchik

OVER THE last months, the term "neoconservative" has been in the air as never before in its 30-year career. Try entering it in *Nexis*, the electronic database of news stories. Even if you were to restrict the request to stories containing "Iraq" and "Bush," the search will abort; the number of entries exceeds the program's capacity. Seven years after Norman Podhoretz, the conductor of the neocon orchestra, pronounced the demise of the movement in these pages,* neoconservatives are seen to be wielding more influence than ever before. For it is they who, notoriously, are alleged to have transformed George W. Bush beyond all recognition. At their hands, the President who as a candidate had envisioned a "humble" America—one that would reduce foreign deployments and avoid nation building—became a warrior chieftain who has already toppled two foreign governments and has laid down an ultimatum to others warning of a similar fate.

"The neoconservatives . . . are largely responsible for getting us into the war against Iraq," observes Elizabeth Drew in the *New York Review of Books*. "The neocon vision has become the hard core of American foreign policy," declares *Newsweek*. "They have penetrated the culture at nearly every level from the halls of academia to the halls of the Pentagon," frets the *New York Times*, adding that "they've accumulated the wherewithal financially [and] professionally to broadcast what they think over the airwaves to the masses or over cocktails to those at the highest levels of government." "Long before George W. Bush reached the White House, many of these confrontations [with other nations] had been contemplated by the neoconservatives," reveals the *National Journal*.

Overseas, where the policies attributed to the neocons are far more controversial than here, the tone is commensurately hotter. A six-page spread in the French weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* described "*les intellectuals neoconservateurs*" as the "ideologues of American empire." The article ran under a banner headline: "After Iraq, the World." In England, the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) aired an hour-long television special that began: "This is a story about people who want the world run their way, the American way, [and] . . . scare the hell out of people." The *Times* of London anxiously urged close British cooperation with the U.S. if only to gain the leverage needed to "spike the ambitions of U.S. neoconservatives."

Who makes up this potent faction? Within the administration, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz is usually identified as the key actor, together with Richard Perle, a member and until recently the chairman of the Defense Advisory

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* "Neoconservatism: A Eulogy," March 1996.

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Board. A handful of other high-level Bush appointees are often named as adherents of the neocon faith, including Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of State John Bolton, National Security Council staff member Elliott Abrams, and Vice Presidential aide Lewis "Scooter" Libby. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI, where I work), the *Weekly Standard* magazine, and William Kristol's Project for a New American Century—all three rent offices in the same building—are often described as constituting the movement's Washington command center. And then, of course, there is this magazine, crucible of so much neoconservative thought.

THE HISTORY of neoconservatism is less sensational than its current usage implies. The term came into currency in the mid-1970's as an anathema—pronounced, by upholders of leftist orthodoxy, against a group of intellectuals, centered mostly in COMMENTARY and the quarterly *Public Interest*, who then still thought of themselves as liberals but were at odds with the dominant thinking of the Left. One part of this group consisted of writers about domestic policy—Irving Kristol, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, James Q. Wilson, Nathan Glazer—who had developed misgivings about the programs of the New Deal or Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. The other main contingent focused on foreign policy, and especially on the decline of America's position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the wake of the Vietnam war. The names here included, among others, Podhoretz, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Eugene V. Rostow. Although, at first, most of these people resisted the label neoconservative, eventually almost all of them acquiesced in it.

Today, many who are called neoconservatives are too young to have taken part in these debates, while others, although old enough, followed a different trajectory in arriving at their political ideas. This would hardly matter if neoconservatism were an actual political movement, or if there were general agreement about its tenets. But few of those writing critically about neoconservatism today have bothered to stipulate what they take those tenets to be. For most, the term seems to serve as a sophisticated-sounding synonym for "hawk" or "hardliner" or even "ultraconservative."

For others, however, it is used with a much more sinister connotation. In their telling, neoconservatives are a strange, veiled group, almost a cabal, whose purpose is to manipulate U.S. policy for ulterior purposes.

Thus, several scribes have concentrated on laying bare the hidden wellsprings of neoconservative belief. These have been found to reside in the thinking of two improbable figures: the immigrant American political philosopher Leo Strauss (1899-1973) and the Bolshevik military commander Leon Trotsky (1879-1940). "Who runs things?," the *New York Times* asked, concluding that "it wouldn't be too much of a stretch to answer: the intellectual heirs of Leo Strauss" with whom the Bush administration is "rife." The *Boston Globe* ran a 3,000-word article claiming that "we live in a world increasingly shaped by Leo Strauss," while in a sidebar to its own feature story on the neocons, *Le Nouvel Observateur* introduced French readers to "Leo Strauss, Their Mentor."

Michael Lind, an American who writes for the British leftist magazine *New Statesman*, has been the most insistent voice invoking the name of Trotsky, or rather "the largely Jewish-American Trotskyist movement" of which, Lind says, "most neoconservative defense intellectuals . . . are products." Jeet Heer, who expounded the Straussian roots of neoconservatism in the *Boston Globe*, went on to disclose the Trotsky connection in Canada's *National Post*. ("Bolshevik's Writings Supported the Idea of Pre-emptive War," ran the subhead.) Others agreed about this dual connection. William Pfaff, in the *International Herald Tribune*, contributed one column on the influence of Leo Strauss and another linking Bush's foreign policy to the "intellectual legacy of the Trotskyism of many of the neoconservative movement's founders." In particular, in Pfaff's judgment, administration policy "seems a rightist version of Trotsky's 'permanent revolution.'"

Actually, neither line of genealogical inquiry is new. Eight years ago, in *Foreign Affairs*, John Judis derided my advocacy of "exporting democracy" as a kind of "inverted Trotskyism." As for Strauss, it was noticed as far back as the Reagan administration that a small number of the philosopher's former students had taken policy positions in the State and Defense departments. But the prize for the recent resuscitation of Strauss's name would seem to belong to the crackpot political agitator Lyndon LaRouche, who began to harp on it in speeches and publications months before any of the references I have cited above. LaRouche, who ceased using the pseudonym Lyn Marcus (a conscious derivation of Lenin Marx) when he vaulted from the far Left to the far Right, and who has served time in a federal penitentiary on charges of gulling elderly people out of their savings in order to fi-

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nance his political movement, has fingered Strauss "along with Bertrand Russell and H.G. Wells" as the parties responsible for "steering the United States into a disastrous replay of the Peloponnesian war."

THIS PREOCCUPATION with ancestor-hunting may seem of secondary interest, but since it is typical of the way most recent "analysis" of neoconservative ideas has been conducted, it is worth pausing over for another moment.

For one thing, the sheer sloppiness of the reporting on the alleged Strauss-Trotsky connection is itself remarkable. Thus, the *New York Times* claimed extravagantly that AEI consists in its entirety of Straussians, whereas a little checking yields, out of 56 scholars and fellows, exactly two who would count themselves as Straussians and a third who would acknowledge a significant intellectual debt to Strauss; none of the three is in the field of foreign policy. The *Times* also identified Perle as a Straussian—which is false—while erroneously stating that he was married to the daughter of the late military strategist Albert Wohlstetter, whom it likewise falsely labeled a Straussian. Even after an initial correction (explaining that Perle had merely studied under Wohlstetter at the University of Chicago and had not married his daughter) and a second correction (acknowledging that Perle had never studied under Wohlstetter *or* attended the University of Chicago), the paper still could not bring itself to retract its fanciful characterizations of either Perle's or Wohlstetter's ties to Strauss. The paper also mischaracterized Podhoretz as an "admirer" of Strauss, which is true only in a very loose sense. Similar errors have infected the stories in other publications.

And Trotsky? Lind in his disquisition on "the largely Jewish-American Trotskyist movement" instanced seven pivotal neocon figures as the Bolshevik revolutionary's acolytes: Wolfowitz, Feith, Libby, Bolton, Abrams, James R. Woolsey, and Perle. This was too much for Alan Wald, a student of political ideas and himself a genuine Troskyist who pointed out that none of these men "ever had an organizational or ideological association with Trotskyism."* Even more ludicrously, Lind characterized a series of open letters to the President published by the Project for the New American Century as "a PR technique pioneered by their Trotskyist predecessors"; whatever Lind may have had in mind by this phrase, genuine Trotskyists would be less interested in sending petitions to the President than in hanging him from the nearest lamppost.

In truth, I can think of only one major neocon figure who did have a significant dalliance with Trotskyism, and that was Irving Kristol. The dalliance occurred during his student days some 60-odd years ago, and whatever imprint it may have left on Kristol's thought certainly did not make him a neoconservative on foreign policy, for in that area his views have been much more akin to those of traditional conservatives. During the 1980's, for example, Kristol opposed the "Reagan Doctrine" of support for anti-Communist guerrillas and belittled the idea of promoting democracy abroad.

But that brings us to the actual ideas of these two presumed progenitors of neoconservatism. Strauss, according to Jeet Heer, emerges from a close reading as a

> disguised Machiavelli, a cynical teacher who encouraged his followers to believe that their intellectual superiority entitles them to rule over the bulk of humanity by means of duplicity.

Similarly, Pfaff:

> An elite recognizes the truth . . . and keeps it to itself. This gives it insight and implicitly power that others do not possess. This obviously is an important element in Strauss's appeal to American conservatives. . . . His real appeal to the neoconservatives, in my view, is that his elitism presents a principled rationalization for policy expediency, and for "necessary lies" told to those whom the truth would demoralize.

Neither Heer nor Pfaff offers a clue as to where in Strauss's corpus one might find these ideas, giving one the impression that they learned what they know of him from a polemical book by one Shadia Drury, who holds a chair in "social justice" at a Canadian university and who finds Strauss to be a "profoundly tribal and fascistic thinker." In any event, although Strauss did write about restrictions on free inquiry, notably in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, his point was not to advocate persecution but to suggest a way of reading philosophers who had composed their work in unfree societies. Far from the authoritarian described by Heer and Pfaff, Strauss, a refugee from Nazi Germany, was a committed democrat whose attachment and gratitude to America ran deep and who, in the words of Allan Bloom (perhaps his most famous student),

* In a shrill rejoinder to Wald, Lind named me as an exemplar of neocon Trotskyism, calling me a "Schachtmannite" [*sic*] to boot. Although I did know Max Shachtman, who was a member of the Socialist party when I was active in its youth arm in the 1960's, I was never a Shachtmanite, and Shachtman himself had ceased to be a Trotskyite about a decade before I met him.

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"knew that liberal democracy is the only decent and just alternative available to modern man."

Both Heer and Pfaff make Strauss out to be a Machiavellian, but both have the story upside down. If there is a single core point in Strauss's teachings, including his book on Machiavelli, it concerns the distinction between ancients and moderns; his own affinity—perhaps eccentric, certainly "conservative"—lay with the thought of the former, who were devoted to knowing the good, in contradistinction to the latter who were more exclusively concerned with practical things. In this understanding, it was Machiavelli who initiated the philosophical break with the Platonic/Aristotelian tradition, a development that Strauss regarded as baneful. But reading political counsel into Strauss is altogether a misplaced exercise. He was not a politico but a philosopher whose life's work was devoted to deepening our understanding of earlier thinkers and who rarely if ever engaged in contemporary politics.

If Strauss's writing is abstruse, Trotsky by contrast is easy to understand, at least if one knows the basic formulas of Marxism. Nonetheless, those who invoke him as another dark influence on neoconservatism are no better informed than those who invoke Strauss. Lind and Pfaff and Judis all refer portentously to Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution," apparently under the impression that by it Trotsky must have intended a movement to spread socialism from one country to another in much the same violent and revolutionary manner that neocons supposedly aim to disseminate their own brand of democracy around the world.

But the theory of permanent revolution was about other matters entirely. According to the late-19th- and early-20th-century Marxists, the socialist revolution could unfold only some years *after* capitalism and the bourgeoisie had triumphed over feudalism; in undeveloped countries like Russia, this meant that socialists had no choice but to support capitalism until it ripened and set the stage for revolution. From this prospect of deadly boredom, Trotsky rescued the movement by arguing for an immediate seizure of power in hopes of somehow telescoping the bourgeois and socialist revolutions into one seamless sequence. That was "permanent revolution."

As is the case with the Strauss-hunters, it is far from evident what any of this has to do with Iraq, terrorism, or promoting democracy. The neocon journalist Arnold Beichman put it sardonically and well: "STOP THE PRESSES: Trotsky . . . wouldn't have supported the Iraq war." On second thought, he probably would have—on Saddam's side.

Finally, if the attempts to link neoconservatives to Strauss and Trotsky are based on misidentification and misconstruction, the fact that *both* linkages have been made—in some cases by the same writer—is stranger still. For it would be hard to come up with a more disparate pair of thinkers. Strauss's mission was to take us back by means of contemplation to the nearly lost past of classical antiquity. Trotsky's was to lead mankind by means of violent action to an unprecedented new society. The one aimed to rescue philosophy from ideology; the other was the consummate ideologue. How, exactly, does neoconservatism bear the earmarks of both of these projects simultaneously? No one has attempted to explain.

THERE IS, however, one thing that Strauss and Trotsky did have in common, and that one thing may get us closer to the real reason their names have been so readily invoked. Both were Jews. The neoconservatives, it turns out, are also in large proportion Jewish—and this, to their detractors, constitutes evidence of the ulterior motives that lurk behind the policies they espouse.

Lind, for example, writes that neocons "call their revolutionary ideology 'Wilsonianism'. . . , but it is really Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution mingled with the far-right Likud strain of Zionism." Lind's view was cited at length and with evident approval by the *National Journal*, which noted that he "isn't alone":

> Commentators from surprisingly diverse spots on the political spectrum [agree] that neocons took advantage of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon to advance a longstanding agenda that is only tangentially related to keeping the United States safe from terrorism. In this view, America's invasion of Iraq and threatening of Syria have little to do with fighting terrorism, eliminating weapons of mass destruction, or promoting democracy. Instead, those actions largely have to do with settling old grievances, putting oil-rich territory into friendly hands, and tilting the balance of power in the Middle East toward Israel.

Elizabeth Drew made a similar point, if more opaquely:

> Because some . . . of the neoconservatives are Jewish and virtually all are strong supporters of the Likud party's policies, the accusation has been made that their aim to "democratize" the region is driven by their desire to surround Israel with more sympathetic neighbors. Such a

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> view would explain the otherwise puzzling statements by Wolfowitz and others before the [Iraq] war that "the road to peace in the Middle East goes through Baghdad." But it is also the case that Bush and his chief political adviser Karl Rove are eager both to win more of the Jewish vote in 2004 than Bush did in 2000 and to maintain the support of the Christian Right, whose members are also strong supporters of Israel.

Drew's use of the word "but" at the head of the last sentence was no doubt designed to distance her from the accusation that the neocons' motive is to serve the interests of Israel, even as the words that follow the "but" only seem to confirm the charge.

More explicit, and more egregious, was the hard-Left historian Paul Buhle, who wrote in *Tikkun* that "It is almost as if the anti-Semitic *Protocols of Zion*, successfully fought for a century, have suddenly returned with an industrial-sized grain of truth"—that "truth" being, of course, that the hawkish policies of the neoconservatives are indeed tailored for Israel's benefit.

Perhaps the most dramatic effort to expose the hidden Jewish interest underlying neocon ideas was the BBC-TV special on America's "war party." It was aired on the program *Panorama*, which touts itself as the British equivalent of CBS's *60 Minutes*, and the lead-in announced: "Tonight: Will America's Superhawks Drag Us into More Wars against Their Enemies?" It did not take long for the meaning of the phrase "*their* enemies" to become apparent. First, however, viewers were introduced to a rogues' gallery of neoconservative interviewees, each of them filmed at an unusually close angle with the head filling the entire screen for an eerie, repulsive effect. Freeze-frame stills of the subjects were also shown, shifting suddenly from color into the look of white-on-black negatives, while in the background one heard sound effects appropriate to a lineup on a police drama. By contrast, the interviewer, Steve Bradshaw, and a number of guests hostile to the neocons were shown mostly in appealing poses.

On the show itself, Perle was introduced as "the neocons' political godfather," a suggestive term whose implication was reinforced by a question put separately to him and another guest: "Are you a Mafia?" As the camera panned over the building that houses AEI and the other arms of this "mafia," we heard from the announcer that here was where the "future is being plotted."

And what exactly *is* being "plotted"? The answer was foreshadowed early on when an unidentified woman-in-the-street said of the war in Iraq: "It seems like there's . . . another agenda that we're not really privy to and that is what concerns me most." Several minutes later, Bradshaw returned to the same motif: "We picked up a recurrent theme of insider talk in Washington. Some leading neocons, people whisper, are strongly pro-Zionist and want to topple regimes in the Middle East to help Israel as well as the U.S." To shed light on this "highly sensitive issue," he then turned to Jim Lobe, identified as a "veteran neocon watcher and longstanding opponent of anti-Semitism."

Lobe was used repeatedly as the show's resident expert. A reporter with the "alternative" media who prides himself on being a nemesis of neoconservatives, he has no special credentials as an "opponent of anti-Semitism," but the gratuitous compliment was there for a purpose—namely, to inoculate him and his hosts against the obvious charge of Jew-baiting. For that is indeed what came next. Bradshaw posed the leading question: "You think it's legitimate to talk about the pro-Israeli politics of some of the neoconservatives?" And Lobe, looking as Jewish as his name sounds, replied: "I think it's very difficult to understand them if you don't begin at that point." A few moments later, in a simulacrum of journalistic balance, Bradshaw allowed the Middle East specialist Meyrav Wurmser to deny any special neoconservative fidelity to Israel. Wurmser is an immigrant to the United States from Israel, and looks and sounds the part; she could not have been chosen with more care to verify the charge she was brought on to deny—that the neoconservatives are indeed a Jewish mafia, dragging both America and Britain into war after war for the sake of Israel.

IF THERE is an element of anti-Semitism at work in some of the attacks on the neoconservatives—and there manifestly is—to call it such is not, alas, enough. Even outright canards need to be rebutted, tedious and demeaning though the exercise may be. So let us ask the question: is it true that neoconservatives are mostly Jews, and are they indeed working to shape U.S. policy out of devotion to the interests of the "Likud party" or of Israel?

Many neoconservatives are in fact Jews. Why this should be so is not self-evident, although part of the answer is surely that Jews, whenever and wherever they have been free to indulge it, exhibit a powerful attraction to politics and particularly to the play of political ideas—an attraction that is evident all across the political spectrum but especially on the Left. Indeed, the disproportionate presence of Jews in early Communist movements in eastern and central Europe became grist for the

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Nazis and other far-Right movements that portrayed Bolshevism as a Jewish cause whose real purpose was (yes) to serve Jewish interests. In reality, Trotsky and Zinoviev and the other Jewish Communists were no more concerned about the interests of the Jewish people than were Lenin and Stalin—which is to say, not at all.

As it happens, the Jewish affinity with the Left may be one reason why neoconservatism boasts so many Jewish adherents: it is a movement whose own roots lie in the Left. But the same affinity is to be seen at work in many of the insinuations *against* Jewish neocons by leftists who are themselves Jews, or who profess some Jewish connection. Michael Lind, for one, has gone out of his way to assert his own Jewish "descent," and *Tikkun* is in some self-professed sense a Jewish magazine. Even the BBC's assault on the neocons featured a Jewish critic in the starring role. So passionate are these Jews in their opposition to neoconservative ideas that they have not hesitated to pander to anti-Semitism in the effort to discredit them. What about *their* ulterior motives, one wonders?

It may sound strange in light of the accusations against them, but in fact the careers of leading neoconservatives have rarely involved work on Middle East issues. The most distinctive of Richard Perle's many contributions to U.S. policy lie in the realm of nuclear-weapons strategy. Elliott Abrams made his mark as a point man for President Reagan's policies toward Central America. Paul Wolfowitz's long career in government includes not only high office in the State and Defense departments but also a stint as ambassador to Indonesia during which he pressed for democratization harder than any of his predecessors.

These three, as well as the rest of the neocon circle, are and were hard-liners toward the USSR, China, Nicaragua, and North Korea. Is it any wonder that they held a similar position toward Saddam Hussein's Iraq? If Israel did not exist, which of them would have *favored* giving Hans Blix's team still more time, or leaving the whole matter in the hands of the UN? Are we to believe that the decades-long neoconservative campaign against Communism and anti-Americanism was a fantastically farsighted Rube Goldberg machine programmed to produce some benefit for Israel somewhere down the line?

The BBC claimed to have found a smoking gun, one that others have pounced on as well. Bradshaw: "In 1996, a group of neocons wrote a report intended as advice for incoming Israeli Prime Minister Benny [*sic*] Netanyahu. It called for . . . removing Saddam Hussein from power, an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right." Perle and Douglas Feith, the latter now a high official in Bush's Defense Department, were among those who had "contributed" to this paper.

Yet even if the BBC had characterized the document accurately, it would not imply what the BBC (and not the BBC alone) suggested it did. The Americans whose names appeared on the paper had long sought Saddam's ouster, an objective that was already, in 1996, the declared policy of the *Clinton* administration. It would thus make more sense to say that, in preparing a paper for Netanyahu, they were trying to influence Israeli policy on behalf of American interests than the other way around. Indeed, most Israeli officials at that time viewed Iran, the sponsor of Hizballah and Hamas, as a more pressing threat to their country than Iraq, and (then as later) would have preferred that *it* be given priority in any campaign against terrorism.

To make matters worse, the BBC fundamentally misrepresented the nature of the document. Contrary to Bradshaw's claim, no "group of neocons" had written it. Rather, it was the work of a rapporteur summarizing the deliberations of a conference, and was clearly identified as such. The names affixed to it were listed as attendees and not as endorsers, much less authors.

In any case, although it is true that many neocons are Jews, it is also true that many are not. Kirkpatrick, Woolsey, Michael Novak, Linda Chavez, William J. Bennett—all are of pure neocon pedigree, while other non-Jews figuring prominently in current foreign-policy debates and today called neocons include Libby, Bolton, AEI president Christopher DeMuth, and Gary Schmitt of the Project for the New American Century. These Gentile neocons are no less strong in their support of Israel than are Jewish neocons, which suggests a stance growing not out of ethnic loyalty but out of some shared analysis of the rights and wrongs of the Arab-Israel conflict.

Just as it is undeniable that many neoconservatives happen to be Jews, it is undeniable that America's war against terrorism will redound to Israel's benefit as the biggest victim of terrorism. But the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, taking at a stroke 3,000 lives, pushed America pretty high up on the list of terror's victims. That blow, and the certain knowledge that the terrorists would try for even greater carnage in the future, drove us to war in 2001 just as Pearl Harbor had done in 1941.

That earlier decision by the United States suf-

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fused Winston Churchill with joy, for England was then on the front lines with the Nazis just as Israel is today on the front line with terrorists. At the time, there were those who said we were going to war for the sake of England. For that matter, there were some who said we were going to war for the sake of the Jews: the subject is perennial. Then, as now, they were wrong.

If any single episode exposes the fatuousness of the charge that neoconservative policies amount to Jewish special pleading, it was the 1990's war in Bosnia—the same conflict that served to crystallize a post-cold-war approach to foreign policy that might fairly be described as neoconservative. It had been in large part as a response to the Soviet challenge that neoconservatism took shape in the first place, so it is only natural that the end of the cold war should have invited the question Norman Podhoretz raised in 1996: was there anything left of neoconservatism to distinguish it from plain, unprefixed conservatism?

One answer to this question may have come as early as 1992, when hostilities first broke out in Bosnia and then-President George H.W. Bush dismissed them as a "hiccup," while Secretary of State James Baker declared: "We have no dog in that fight." These two were not heartless men, but they were exemplars of a traditional conservative cast of mind. The essence of the matter, as they saw it, was that Bosnia engaged little in the way of American interests, which in the conventional view meant vital resources, or strategic geography, or the safety of allies.

Then a movement coalesced in opposition to American inaction. Its leaders, apart from a handful of young foreign-service officers who had resigned from the State Department in protest and who carried no ideological labels, were almost all from neoconservative ranks. Perle, Wolfowitz, Kirkpatrick, and Max Kampelman were among those in the forefront. So ardent was I myself on the issue that Bosnia was the chief of several points impelling me to support Bill Clinton against Bush in 1992, a choice over which I would sing my regrets in these pages when Clinton turned out to care not a whit more about Bosnia than had the elder Bush.*

It bears recalling that the Bosnian cause was championed by international Islamists, and that the Bosnians themselves had been part of the Croatian fascist state during World War II, infamous for its brutality toward Jews. Logically, then, if there was any "Jewish interest" in the conflict, it should have led to support for the Bush-Clinton position. But as the bloodletting wore on, neoconservatives, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, were much more likely than traditional conservatives to support intervention. Despite the occasional, prominent exception—neoconservative columnist Charles Krauthammer was an opponent of intervention, conservative Senator Bob Dole a supporter—the prevailing division on Bosnia demonstrated that a distinctive neoconservative sensibility, if not ideology, endured, or perhaps had been reborn, after the end of the cold war. It centered on the question of the uses of American power, and it was held even by some who had not made the whole journey from liberalism with the original neocons.

WHAT IS that sensibility? In part it may consist in a greater readiness to engage American power and resources where nothing but humanitarian concerns are at issue. In larger part, however, it is concerned with national security, sharing with traditional conservatism the belief that military strength is irreplaceable and that pacifism is folly. Where it parts company with traditional conservatism is in the more contingent approach it takes to guarding that security.

Neoconservatives sought action in Bosnia above all out of the conviction that, however remote the Balkans may be geographically and strategically, allowing a dictator like Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic to get away with aggression, ethnic cleansing, and mass murder in Europe would tempt other malign men to do likewise elsewhere, and other avatars of virulent ultranationalism to ride this ticket to power. Neoconservatives believed that American inaction would make the world a more dangerous place, and that ultimately this danger would assume forms that would land on our own doorstep. Thus it had happened throughout the 20th century; and thus, in the fullness of time, it would happen again on September 11 of the first year of the 21st.

In addition to their more contingent approach to security, neoconservatives have shown themselves more disposed to experiment with unconventional tactics—using air strikes against the Serbs, arming the Bosnians or, later, the Iraqi National Congress. By contrast, conservatives of traditional bent are more inclined to favor the use of overwhelming force or none at all, and to be more concerned with "exit strategies." Still another distinguishing characteristic is that neoconservatives put greater stock in the political and ideological aspects of conflict.

A final distinction may reflect neoconservativism's vestigial links with liberalism. This is the enthusiasm for democracy. Traditional conservatives are more likely to display an ambivalence toward this form of government, an ambivalence expressed centuries ago

* "Lament of a Clinton Supporter," August 1993.

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by the American founders. Neoconservatives tend to harbor no such doubts.

With this in mind, it also becomes easier to identify the true neoconservative models in the field of power politics: Henry "Scoop" Jackson, Ronald Reagan, and Winston Churchill. These were tough-minded men who were far from "conservative" either in spirit or in political pedigree. Jackson was a Democrat, while Reagan switched to the Republicans late in life, as Churchill did from the Liberals to the Tories. All three were staunch democrats and no less staunch believers in maintaining the might of the democracies. All three believed in confronting democracy's enemies early and far from home shores; and all three were paragons of ideological warfare.

Each, too, was a creative tactician. Jackson's eponymous "amendments" holding the Soviet Union's feet to the fire on the right of emigration and blocking a second unequal nuclear agreement put a stop to American appeasement. Reagan's provocative rhetoric, plus his arming of anti-Communist guerrillas, paved the way to American victory in the cold war. Churchill's innovative ideas, which rightly or wrongly had won him disrepute in the first world war, were essential to his nation's survival in the second. Could this element in neoconservatism help explain why the cause of Israel, an innovative, militarily strong democracy, is embraced by all neoconservatives, non-Jews as well as Jews?

But this brings us back at last to the question of the neocons' alleged current influence. How *did* their ideas gain such currency? Did they "hijack" Bush's foreign policy, right out from under his nose and the noses of Richard Cheney, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, and Condoleezza Rice—all members of the same team that, to hear the standard liberal version, was itself so diabolically clever that in the 2000 election it had stolen the presidency itself?

The answer is to be found not in conspiracy theories but in the terrorist outrage of September 11, 2001. Though it constituted a watershed in American history, this event was novel not in kind but only in scale. For roughly 30 years, Middle Eastern terrorists had been murdering Americans in embassies, barracks, airplanes, and ships—even, once before, in the World Trade Center. Except for a few criminal prosecutions and the lobbing of a few mostly symbolic shells, the U.S. response had been inert. Even under President Reagan, Americans fled in the wake of the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, then the largest single attack we had suffered.

Terrorism, we were told, was an accepted way of doing politics in the Middle East. More than a handful of the region's governments openly supported it, and the PLO, an outfit steeped in terror, was the poster child of the Arab cause. Any strong response to this scourge would serve only to make the people of the region angrier at us, and generate still more terrorists.

ON SEPTEMBER 11, we learned in the most dreadful way that terrorists would not be appeased by our diffidence; quite the contrary. We saw—they themselves told us—that they intended to go on murdering us in ever larger numbers as long as they could. A sharp change of course was required, and the neoconservatives, who had been warning for years that terror must not be appeased, stood vindicated—much as, more grandly, Churchill was vindicated by Hitler's depredations after Munich.

Not only did the neocons have an analysis of what had gone wrong in American policy, they also stood ready with proposals for what to do now: to wage war on the terror groups and to seek to end or transform governments that supported them, especially those possessing the means to furnish terrorists with the wherewithal to kill even more Americans than on September 11. Neocons also offered a long-term strategy for making the Middle East less of a hotbed of terrorism: implanting democracy in the region and thereby helping to foment a less violent approach to politics.

No neoconservative was elevated in office after September 11, as Churchill had been to prime minister after the collapse of the Munich agreement, but policies espoused by neoconservatives were embraced by the Bush administration. Was this because Bush learned them from the likes of Wolfowitz and Perle? Or did he and his top advisers—none of them known as a neocon—reach similar conclusions on their own? We may have to await the President's memoirs to learn the answer to that narrow question, but every American has reason to be grateful for the result.

If these policies should fail, for whatever reason—including a recurrence of national faint-heartedness—then neoconservative ideas will no doubt be discredited. But this matters hardly at all compared with what we will have lost. For, if they fail, either we will then be at the mercy of ever more murderous terrorism or we will have to seek alternative methods of coping with it—methods that are likely to involve a much more painful and frightening course of action than the admittedly daunting one that still lies before us.

If, however, the policies succeed, then the world will have been delivered from an awful scourge, and there will be credit enough to go around—some of it, one trusts, even for the lately much demonized neoconservatives.

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Winks, Nods, Disguises—and Racial Preference

Carl Cohen

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, when the case of *Bakke* v. *University of California* arrived before the U.S. Supreme Court, it was widely anticipated that the Justices would at last resolve an issue that had been bedeviling the country for years: the permissibility of preference by race in university admissions. It did not happen. To the contrary, the internal divisions of the Court at that time, as reflected in six tangled opinions, left the matter in a more muddled condition than it already was. True, Allan Bakke, the white applicant who had been turned down by the University of California in favor of less qualified minority candidates, won his suit; naked racial preference was thrown out. But what *other* sorts of racial and ethnic preferences might be permitted was left quite uncertain.

The chief muddler in 1978 was Justice Lewis Powell, a decent man and an honorable judge who found racial discrimination appalling and unconstitutional and yet also felt that he had to permit some wiggle room for college admissions officers to attend to race under some circumstances. In his long and convoluted opinion, notorious for the confusion to which it subsequently gave rise, Powell held that it would be reasonable for a university to take into consideration the race of particular applicants for the sake of achieving intellectual "diversity" in the student body. To treat people in general differently because of their color, Powell said, was plainly a violation of the equal-protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. But to allow the race of individual applicants to weigh in their favor for the sake of diversity did not amount to such a violation.

No other Justice joined Powell in his confused and rather fanciful homage to the concept of diversity. And yet his principle took root. This was in part because, in a Court divided between two parties of four, his had been the deciding voice. For the universities, the problem with *Bakke* was that it unambiguously rejected preferences for the sake of remedying past injustices committed against racial minorities—precisely the defense that, until then, many universities had been relying upon. If they were determined to go on giving preference, as for the most part they were, they would henceforth have to lean upon the weak reed of Powell's speculations concerning diversity. And this, for the next quarter-century, they proceeded to do.

But would the "diversity defense" withstand renewed constitutional challenge? That central question was presented to the Supreme Court in two cases involving the University of Michigan and finally decided this past June: *Gratz* v. *Bollinger*, concerning the admissions practices of Michigan's undergraduate college, and *Grutter* v. *Bollinger*, concerning the admissions practices of its law school.

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("Bollinger" is Lee Bollinger, formerly the president of the university.) Though the two cases differed significantly in their particulars, in each case the university justified its practice of using racial preferences on the grounds not of remediation but of diversity.

One would have thought—I certainly thought—that the university would have an extremely tough time of it. For any state to treat people differently by race is an odious practice, presumptively unconstitutional and hence subject to the rigorous standard of "strict scrutiny" applied to any putative exceptions to the rule. That standard has two prongs. To win the day, the university would need five of the nine Justices to agree both that racial diversity was a "compelling" need of the state of Michigan and that the system of preference it was using had been "narrowly tailored" to meet that compelling need.

How could it do that? It seemed eminently plain that the state's need for racial diversity in its university, if it had any such need at all, was not compelling under any ordinary meaning of that term. Moreover, the two Michigan systems giving preference, so far from being narrowly tailored, were (as one federal judge had earlier put it) more like a chain saw than a sewing machine in their mode of operation. Success for the University of Michigan thus seemed very unlikely indeed.

So confident was I that five Supreme Court votes could not be gathered to support a view plainly concocted only to pass muster under Powell's 1978 opinion that two years ago I came as close as the editors of COMMENTARY would permit me to predicting certain defeat for the university ("Race Preferences & the Universities—A Final Reckoning?," September 2001). As I saw it, *no* judge, taking seriously the standard of strict scrutiny, could possibly approve diversity as a state need compelling enough to justify deliberate racial discrimination. Right and left, I wagered steak dinners with every soft-headed supporter of the diversity principle who would allow his political passions to overrule his good sense.

I am buying many steaks these days.

IN *Gratz* v. *Bollinger*, the Supreme Court of the United States did hold that the numerical admissions system used by Michigan's undergraduate college, in which a given number of points was awarded to all applicants in certain ethnic categories, violated the equal-protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment as well as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. But on the same day, in *Grutter* v. *Bollinger*, the Court held that "the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body" were indeed, in the context of higher education, a compelling state interest. Moreover, the particular form of deliberate racial discrimination practiced by the law school of the University of Michigan was found to be *consistent* with the constitutional guarantee of equal protection of the laws.

The diversity principle, even if only in one context, and with heavy restrictions, has thus been embedded in law; Powell's weak reed has become a mighty limb. In the meantime, in the tension between these two latest decisions, what was muddy in *Bakke* has become muddier still.

Much damage has been inflicted on the standard of strict scrutiny itself. As the four dissenting opinions in *Grutter* (the law-school decision) make vividly, even bitterly, clear, the need of the state of Michigan for diversity of skin colors in its university admissions was hardly "compelling." Even the maintenance of a law school by the state of Michigan, as Justice Clarence Thomas pointed out, although surely a good thing, is not a compelling need; many states thrive without one. Nor, for that matter, has the university's program delivered on its promise: exhaustive research has shown that its purported benefits (i.e., the promotion of tolerance and understanding for the views of "diverse" others) have been in scant evidence. No genuinely "compelling" educational need is being served.

As for the second prong of the standard of strict scrutiny—the requirement that, even if some compelling state need has been identified, the use of racial classifications must be narrowly tailored to the fulfillment of that need—the race preferences given by the law school, no less than the rejected admissions system of Michigan's undergraduate college, likewise failed to satisfy it. Demonstrating this failure formed the nub of Chief Justice Rehnquist's dissenting opinion in *Grutter*, in which he was joined by Justices Clarence Thomas, Antonin Scalia, and Anthony Kennedy. It has not been widely understood.

According to the University of Michigan, the educational benefits of diversity were said to flow from the creation of a "critical mass" of minority representatives in the student body: a number sufficiently large that the members of a given minority in a given class would not feel themselves "isolated" in that class. The racial instrument used in law-school admissions was, the university held, narrowly tailored to this end. Unlike the practice in the undergraduate college, the law school, in evaluating applicants, claimed not to rely on some fixed numerical value mechanically awarded to

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every member of certain ethnic groups. Instead, the critical masses needed for the three designated minorities—African-Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics—were said to have been artfully assembled through the use of highly sensitive reviews of each individual applicant.

Indeed, in the earlier, district-court trial of *Grutter*, as in the university's written arguments for the Supreme Court, the law school had gone to great lengths to avoid any mention whatsoever of numbers or percentages. And for good reason: any open confession of this kind would have exposed the school to the same condemnation received by the undergraduate college in *Gratz*. But the entire law-school system was a deception. The dissenting opinion of the Chief Justice proved this.

In any given class of students, a "critical mass," whatever it is, cannot be greatly different in size for African-Americans from what it is for other minorities; nor can it differ greatly in one year from what it was three years earlier, at least if the class itself has not changed in size. In fact, however, the numbers of the several minorities admitted to the Michigan law school in order to form their respective "critical masses" differed very greatly from minority to minority and, for each minority, from year to year. Calling attention to this starkly revealing feature of the school's admissions over a period of many years, and inserting numerical tables into his opinion to render the matter incontrovertible, Justice Rehnquist showed that the number of those admitted in each minority closely tracked the *number of applications* by members of that minority.

The figures themselves are worth examining. In recent years, the Michigan law school has offered admission each year, on average, to sixteen Native Americans, 51 Hispanics, and 100 African-Americans. If what had really been sought was a critical mass of each minority—that is, a number sufficiently large to ward off feelings of isolation within the class—and if the yield of 50 offers was enough to achieve that in the case of Hispanics, it cannot be the case (as the Chief Justice pointed out) that the yield of 100 offers was needed among some other minority, or that the yield of sixteen offers would be sufficient in the case of still another.

How did the numbers themselves come about? Rehnquist described the process. When, in 1995, 9.7 percent of the applicant pool was African-American, 9.4 percent of those admitted were African-Americans. Five years later, when 7.5 percent of the applicant pool was African-American, 7.3 percent of those admitted were African-Americans. A similar pattern was manifest throughout.

This "tight correlation between the percentage of applicants and admittees of a given race," Rehnquist wrote, devastatingly, could

> only be the result of very careful race-based planning. . . . *We are bound to conclude that the law school has managed its admission program, not to achieve a "critical mass," but to extend offers of admission to members of selected minority groups in proportion to their statistical representation in the applicant pool.* [emphasis added]

Despite the law school's repeated protestations to the contrary, the statistics demonstrate that it was seeking some proportional representation of minorities in its entering classes. Its real objective was not critical mass—this, in Rehnquist's words, was "simply a sham"—but racial balance. But it could not have proclaimed this obvious truth, contending forthrightly that such proportionality would serve as its achievement of "diversity," for the simple reason that the admission of persons simply to achieve certain percentages of various ethnic groups is "patently unconstitutional." Justice Powell had made that point crisply in *Bakke* decades ago, and the same proposition was affirmed by the majority in *Grutter* without reservation. Instead, the law school engaged in a sham.

The *Grutter* majority accepted the sham whole hog. Baldly asserting that student-body ethnic diversity was a compelling state need, it found this end narrowly served by a process in which, allegedly, ethnicity was considered as no more than a "plus factor" in the files of "particular applicants," all the attributes of each applicant being "holistically" appraised and "all pertinent elements of diversity considered in light of the particular qualifications of each applicant" in the quest for a critical mass. (The language is that of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor in her majority opinion.) On this reading, the fact that, of two law-school applicants with identical academic credentials, a black applicant's chances of admission were in fact *hundreds* of times greater than those of a white applicant must be regarded as no more than a coincidence.

If this is strict scrutiny, the term is without meaning.

THANKS TO the Court's decision, still worse is now to come. The law-school system, a sham in reality, has been elevated to the status of a model—and not only for law schools. As we have seen, Michigan's use of race in *undergraduate* admissions, which did not pretend to be "individualized" or "holistic," was on that account found to be

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flatly unconstitutional. But henceforth, Michigan and many other universities will formulate their undergraduate preferential schemes in phrases echoing the language of the law-school program. Beginning now, "individualized review," "holistic," "critical mass," "plus factor," "a particular applicant's file," and the like will appear ubiquitously and talismanically in the description of admission systems from coast to coast.

Of course, it will be far easier to profess such highly individualized review systems than to realize them. And so a second-level sham will be explicitly invited: a fraud imitating a fraud.

Consider: the law school at Michigan enrolls some 350 new students each year. Of the several thousand who apply, a good number are speedily disqualified, with many of the remaining applicants interviewed in person and the complete file of every admitted applicant examined by a single person, the assistant dean for admissions. Even though, at the Michigan law school, the real goal has been racial balancing, the requisite process of "individualization," as approved by the Court, is conceivably doable, if with some strain.

The undergraduate college at Michigan is a rather different affair. It receives more than *25,000* applications for admission each year. Picture a gymnasium in which those fat application files are stacked in piles six feet high; there will be some 350 of these piles, or more, pretty nearly stuffing the gymnasium to the gills. Now imagine that each application is to be evaluated comparatively, with race and many other factors given varying and appropriate weights in the assessment of each candidate. Remember, *no* numerical value for ethnicity is to be assigned, no quantitative system applied.

How, in the name of reason, is the comparison of these 25,000 applicants to be carried out? Even for an army of admissions officers, the exercise would be hopeless. It is utterly impossible for the University of Michigan—not to speak of universities in Minnesota and Ohio and other states where undergraduate colleges are substantially larger still—to review all the particular qualifications of each of tens of thousands of applicants, weighing race as but one factor, without using some numerical calculus. Any future claim to that effect is *guaranteed* to be a deception.

IN ITS written argument defending the mechanical award of points for race in undergraduate admissions, the University of Michigan granted candidly that "the volume of applications and the presentation of applicant information make it impractical for [the undergraduate college] to use the . . . admissions system" of the law school. Of course. That is why the university argued, in effect, that since the racial results it sought could only be achieved using a system of numerical weights, such a system must be permissible, for there is no other way to achieve the approved aim of diversity.

No! responded the Court in *Gratz*. The use of race is permitted in some ways, but it is not urged, and you are certainly not entitled to do whatever you think is required. The Court's strictures were not to be bypassed: a university may not "employ whatever means it desires to achieve the stated goal of diversity without regard to the limits imposed by our strict-scrutiny analysis." Nor did "the fact that the implementation of a program providing individualized consideration might present administrative challenges . . . render constitutional an otherwise problematic system." So, under *Gratz*, the university has been forbidden to do what it asserts it must do in order to achieve the racial objective it asserts it must pursue and which, under *Grutter*, has now been found "compelling." Here, in the pull of the two decisions against each other, is indeed a recipe for still more pervasive obfuscation and more shameful hypocrisy.

Justice Ruth Ginsburg, who dissented from the majority in *Gratz*, saw this clearly. Writing in support of the now-unlawful point system, she frankly acknowledged that universities have already been deceitful and sly in this arena, resorting to "camouflage" by encouraging minority applicants and their supporters to convey their ethnic identification deviously and backhandedly in personal essays and letters of recommendation. Justice Ginsburg then concluded: "If honesty is the best policy, surely Michigan's accurately described, fully disclosed college affirmative-action program is preferable to achieving similar numbers through winks, nods, and disguises." Narrow tailoring need not be faked; instead, in Ginsburg's view, it could simply be ignored. A non-individualized program, assigning a fixed number of points for skin color, was the answer. Unless we permitted it, the result would be widespread cheating.

She was certainly right about the cheating. But cheating is already endemic, and is now bound to spread further. For those bent on racial preference, the "winks, nods, and disguises" decried by Ginsburg have now, thanks to her and her likeminded colleagues in *Grutter*, been made a practical necessity.

In a footnote to the opinion striking down the undergraduate point system, Chief Justice Rehnquist called Ginsburg's observations "remarkable," and answered them sharply:

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> First, they suggest that universities—to whose academic judgment we are told in *Grutter* we should defer—will pursue their affirmative-action programs whether or not they violate the United States Constitution. Second, they recommend that these violations should be dealt with, not by requiring the universities to obey the Constitution, but by changing the Constitution so that it conforms to the conduct of the universities.

THIS FOOTNOTE, destined to become famous, goes to the heart of the two cases. Conduct that is plainly wrong and ugly if confronted openly has been condoned by five members of the Supreme Court if carefully hidden and deliberately misdescribed. The unconscionable deceptions of years past are now enshrined and soon to be compounded. Duplicity is encouraged to run amok.

To be sure, there are some signs of judicial distress. Even Justice O'Connor, who in *Grutter* found race preference tolerable, reluctantly acknowledged that "there are serious problems of justice connected with the idea of preference itself." These are precisely the problems that will saddle universities, and American society, for years to come.

How many years? The Court accepted the assurances of the University of Michigan that the racial discrimination it now practices must some day end. The firmly expressed expectation of the Court is that this will happen within 25 years (a piety to which Justice Thomas retorted that the principle of equality ought not have to wait a quarter of a century to be vindicated). In the meantime, what lies ahead is the agony of a long chain of public disputes. For one thing, there will be no end of quarreling over the systems of preference being given. Although the universities will claim the protection of the words used in *Grutter*, it will be very hard to hide the reality of their practices, and these will be subjected to continuing adverse scrutiny. We may thus be reasonably certain that Michigan and those of its sister institutions likewise relying upon allegedly nonquantified diversity as the justification for preferences will be back in court again and again.

But the controversy will also move from the courtroom to the ballot box. If the Supreme Court has found that, in the interest of diversity, race preference may be given, it remains for the people of the several states to decide for themselves whether, in their state, race preference is to be forbidden. In Michigan, for example, every effort will be made by the time of the presidential election of 2004 to place on the ballot a Michigan Civil Rights Initiative—an equivalent of California's Proposition 209. The operative sentence in that proposition, now incorporated in the California constitution, is nearly identical to a critical passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with the addition of five words that appear here in emphasis. It reads:

> The state shall not discriminate against, *or grant preferential treatment to*, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting.

Once the matter is on the ballot, it will also become more difficult for legislators and political candidates to dodge this controversy as they have so often done in the past. Will they urge their constituents to vote *against* a proposition forbidding race preference? If so, must we not conclude that they *support* race preference?

The decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Grutter* v. *Bollinger* is disheartening in the extreme. But the governing rule in this matter will come ultimately from the citizenry, and we must trust that the large majority of Americans, as reported in survey after survey and confirmed in election after election, continues to find racism of every sort disgusting. I was wrong about the outcome of the battle in court; now the war must move to other fronts.

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Out of Andalusia

Hillel Halkin

GEOGRAPHICALLY, EXCEPT for Spain, the world of Arabic-speaking Islam was the same in the Middle Ages as it is today. Although this vast expanse had no one central government, it was possible to travel from Morocco, which lies as far west as Ireland, to Oman on the Persian Gulf, and from Aden, on the latitude of Costa Rica, to Cordoba, on the latitude of Washington, D.C., while remaining within the bounds of a single language, culture, and religion.

It is no wonder, then, that the great travelers of the Middle Ages were the Arabs, since—unlike the rare European like Marco Polo—they could cross thousands of miles by ship, foot, or beast of burden without needing an interpreter or a guide to local custom. Not surprisingly, too, the literary genre of the picaresque, the adventures of the wanderer who lives by his wits, is a medieval Arab invention that dates to the late 10th century. And in an age in which most Jews lived in Arab lands and were heavily influenced by Arab culture, it was also natural that such books, known in Arabic as *maqamat*, had their imitations, called *mahbarot*, in Hebrew.

The classical book of *maqama*, to use the singular form, is defined by three main features. The first is a number of independent chapters or "gates"—50 was the norm—each of which tells a brief tale whose itinerant hero, turning up now here, now there, outwits (or is less frequently outwitted by) the local population. The second is that, in this shifting kaleidoscope of places and situations, there are two fixed characters, the roguish traveler and a narrator, also a wanderer, who serendipitously keep running into each other. And thirdly and most strangely for the Western reader, this narration takes place in a prose that the Arabs called *saj* and that has no counterpart in European literature.

Saj is a pre-Islamic Arabic form that rhymes internally but does not have line breaks, meter, a set number of words or syllables between rhymes, or a set number of times a rhyme may recur. Although it may sound like doggerel to the Western ear, it did not impress the Arabs as such, in part because Arabic, like Hebrew, has numerous inflectional suffixes that make it easy to maintain long chains of rhyme. Medieval Arabs and Jews considered *saj* elegant and resorted to it widely for correspondence and serious writing. Even a major philosopher like al-Ghazali began his great work *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* with a rhymed prose introduction.

It is impossible to try duplicating al-Ghazali's rhymes in a language like English without sounding incongruously jingle-like. In the case of a basically comic genre like the *maqama*, however, a sufficiently creative and ingenious translator might conceivably pull the stunt off. No rhymed English version of a complete Arabic "50-gater" has been attempted as yet, but luckily we now do have David Segal's wonderful new rendition of Judah Alharizi's *The Book*

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of Tahkemoni,* the most justly renowned of all Hebrew *mahbarot*. It offers the English reader, for the first time, the full experience of an important literary form, and it tempts one to speculate about such varied things as medieval Jewish attitudes toward Islam and the arrested development of Islamic thought in the Middle Ages—a phenomenon that is surely related to the Arab world's failure to modernize intellectually in our own times.

JUDAH (or Yehuda) Alharizi was born in Spain in 1165, most likely in mixed Christian-Muslim Toledo, and lived for a while as a young man in southern France. A translator by profession, he rendered most of Maimonides' newly published *Guide of the Perplexed* from Arabic into Hebrew and produced a Hebrew version of the enormously popular book of *maqamat* of Abu-Muhammed al-Hariri (1054-1122), to this day an exemplar of its kind. His translation of al-Hariri was extremely free and adaptive, taking the Arab author's Muslim characters and settings and changing them into Jewish ones, so that an innocent Hebrew reader might have thought it to be an original Hebrew composition. Then, apparently inspired by this, he set out to wander through the Arab world himself, reaching and residing in such places as Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus, Mosul, and Baghdad.

It may have been the experiences gained from this long voyage that convinced Alharizi that he should do more than just copy al-Hariri in Hebrew, a vernacularly dead language that many Jews thought incapable of Arabic's subtlety and sophistication. In any case, he now decided to write an original Hebrew work of *maqama* that would show Hebrew to be the equal, if not the superior, of its Semitic sister, whose Qur'an, from which Arabic writers drew much of their inspiration, was, as far as he was concerned, the real copy-cat when compared with the Bible. As he put it in his preface to the *Tahkemoni*, translated by Segal:

> Now I will tell you what moved me to compose this book: a certain Arab sage, the pride of his age, master of incision, who turned rivals to a mockery and derision, whose mouth was an open vision, one known as al-Hariri, who left all rivals panting and weary, composed a stunning work in Arabic, rhymed prose in metric stich—even if he dealt in contraband: for, lo, his vessel is with Hebrew sailors manned! Demand of its every trope, How came you here to stand? And the latter will reply, I was stolen away out of the Hebrew land.
>
> Now when I saw this book my tongue turned leather, the heavens of my joy rolled together, for all peoples, old or young, take heed to their ways that they sin not with their tongue. But our Holy Tongue, Beauty's very mother, is turned Cain's brother. Vulgarity supplants clarity; homeliness, comeliness; tarnish, varnish. We are unsound, unwound, a dry root in dry ground. Alas our language: our folk have slandered and defaced her, all but erased her, saying, Hebrew is lean and lacking, so much faded sacking; but they are too obtuse to realize that they are blind to her use, too dense to know that theirs is the offense.

Hebrew, Alharizi insisted, could do everything Arabic could do, from high to low:

> Hence I wrote this book to raise Hebrew's holy tower, to show our holy folk her suppleness and power. . . . Yes, I tell of teetotalers and drinkers, of warriors and thinkers, spin tales of journeys, of king's and poet's tourneys, prayers and supplication, praise and protestation, the rebuke of the wise and good fortune's demise, the role of Love's gazelles and the cool of desert wells, stint's harsh breeze and beggar's please, wind and water, sword and slaughter, harts' hunt and heart's want, travelers' treks and slippery decks and vessels' wrecks, slandering, pandering, and Youth's meandering, Nazirites' vows and drunken carouse, paramours, ills and cures, blockheads and boors, guile's school and the gulled fool, gibe and jeer and snub and sneer, song enchanted, wine discanted, witty invention, brazen contention—all this that this book might be Song's manse and garden, wherein every seeker might sate his quest, every petitioner gain his behest; herein shall the weary rest.

There is a jaunty bravado in these lines, reminiscent of the ritual boastings of rap lyrics, that asks not to be taken too seriously. And yet Alharizi is raising a serious point—more precisely, a sore point—that has, I think, been insufficiently taken into account in modern conceptions of the position of Jews and Jewish intellectuals in the medieval Muslim world.

IT IS a cliché of our contemporary discourse about Jews and Arabs that the former were, in the Middle Ages, better off in Muslim lands than in Christian ones—and as is generally the case with

* The subtitle is "Jewish Tales from Medieval Spain." Translated and annotated by David Simha Segal, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 722 pp., $77.00 (cloth), $24.95 (paper).

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clichés, there is a measure of truth in this one. Although there were times and places in which Jews suffered as badly under Islam as they did during their worse moments in Christendom, it is fair to say that they were on the whole treated more liberally by Muslims than by Christians. In some instances, like that of the so-called "golden age" of 10th-to-mid-12th-century Andalusia, they were involved in the economic, cultural, and even political life of Muslim society to the point that some historians have tended to view this period as an ecumenical utopia. One such scholar, María Rosa Menocal, has written in her recently published and highly acclaimed *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain**:

> The Jews understood themselves to be Andalusians . . . much as the German Jews of the late 19th century . . . considered themselves Germans, or the American Jews in the second half of the 20th century, who helped define the intellectual and literary qualities of their time, never thought twice about calling themselves American. But unlike many later European and American Jews, the Andalusian Jews had not had to abandon their orthodoxy to be fully a part of the body politic and culture of their place and time. The Jews of el-Andalus were able to openly observe and eventually enrich their Judaic and Hebrew heritage and at the same time fully participate in the general cultural and intellectual scene.

But if Menocal is right that Andalusian Jews participated in "the body politic and culture" surrounding them, she is guilty of anachronistically wishful thinking about their sense of themselves. There is not a single Jewish source from golden-age Spain that speaks of Jews as Andalusians, or of a joint Jewish-Muslim identity. Nor could there be, given the fact that Jews and Muslims were religious rivals and that, just as the Hebrew Bible was a suspect document in Muslim eyes, so the Qur'an for Jews, as Alharizi says, was "stolen away out of the Hebrew land."

TO APPRECIATE what Alharizi meant by this we need to consider a second cliché—namely, that medieval Jews felt more comfortable with Islam than with Christianity because the former was, like Judaism, a pure monotheistic faith, whereas the latter, with its doctrine of the Trinity and its incarnate God, was tainted by polytheism and paganism. This assumption rests heavily on the Jewish legal tradition, most notably articulated by Maimonides, that a Jew may convert to Islam but not to Christianity in order to save his life, since becoming a Muslim does not make him guilty of idol worship.

A legal ruling, though, is not a comprehensive emotional and intellectual response—and when we look at the response to Islamic culture of a medieval Jewish writer like Alharizi, the "heavens of whose joy" caved in upon reading a popular Arabic work of literature, we find not identification but envy, scorn, and a sense of Jewish humiliation that no Christian book could have produced. In part, this is because Islam *is* closer to Judaism in its theology and religious sensibility; psychologically, after all, it is the rivals we most resemble whose success most wounds us when set alongside our own failure, since it suggests that our problem lies not in being different but in being inferior. It was easy for Jews to rationalize the triumph of Christianity in terms of Christianity's falsehood, which appealed to a world too weak and sinful to renounce pagan ways; it was far more difficult to explain the ascendancy of Islam, which repudiated that world as resolutely as did Judaism.

Inaccurate, too, is the common view that medieval Jews were less offended by Islam because its truth claims did not clash with their own as violently as did Christianity's. Whereas Christians, it is said, accused the Jews of having murdered the son of God and brought down on themselves an eternal curse, thus making them the arch-infidels, Muslims merely blamed them for rejecting the revelation of Muhammad, a sin they shared with others, Christians included. What this formulation ignores, however, is the fact that Christianity's quarrel with Judaism, while more bitter, was also, from the Jewish point of view, more to the point and less demeaning, since Christianity understood every word of the Jewish Bible to be divinely given and true. Though the Jews, Christians believed, had misread the "Old Testament," they had not fabricated it or misrepresented its provenance, and its account of their history and chosenness, up to the advent of Jesus, was correct. Because Christianity, in this sense, never denied the Jews their own reality, the Jewish-Christian argument was profound and focused.

But Islam and the Qur'an did deny Jewish reality, right from its very beginning—that is, from the time of Abraham, whose best-loved son, according to Islamic tradition, was not Isaac but Ishmael, and whose life story had been deliberately falsified by the Book of Genesis to conceal the fact that he was the first Muslim. Nor was it Abraham alone. Adam,

* Little, Brown, 272 pp., $26.95 (cloth), $14.95 (paper).

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Noah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon: the story of every major figure in the Bible is told differently by the Qur'an, which openly charges the Bible with repeatedly lying. "Woe," says Muhammad, "to those who write the Book [i.e., the Bible] with their hands and then say, 'This is from Allah!'"

To thinking Jews, this made Islam not a less but a more preposterous faith than Christianity. If Christianity was an affront to rational monotheism, Islam was an insult to human intelligence itself, since who could take seriously a religion that, having come into existence 2,000 years after its parent faith, accused the parent of counterfeiting a past of which it now claimed to possess the true version? This was indeed a religion of stolen contraband.

Of course, Alharizi could never say such a thing openly in an Islamic land, since even a liberal Muslim society—and by his lifetime, Muslim Spain had fallen into the hands of the highly illiberal Almohads—might punish a Jew severely for such a thing. This was why his question of "How come you here to stand?" is put to al-Hariri, an author he admired, rather than to the Muslim religion for which it was intended; and it is why all Jewish writers in medieval Muslim lands were extremely careful in talking about Islam. When Yehuda Halevi, for instance, writing in Spain toward the end of the golden age, pens a Hebrew poem expressing his hope for Islam's downfall, he speaks in code: The Arab is "Hagar's son," Islam is the "desert-ass," its religious claims are an obscure Aramaic verse from the Book of Daniel that speaks of "the high-and-mighty mouth," and so on.

IT IS only when we realize that Jewish attitudes toward medieval Islam were consistently encoded in this way that we understand how far from ecumenical even the golden age was. Although Jews may have gotten along with their Muslim neighbors, liked and respected them, admired their achievements, and often, like Alharizi, wished to emulate them, their opinion of the religion of Islam was always tinged with contempt.

But so, of course, as Alharizi was well aware, was the Muslim view of Judaism. In the one chapter of *The Tahkemoni* that deals with Jewish-Muslim relations, he writes about a company of Jews who approach a Muslim street astrologer and—whether as a joke or not—request him to forecast when the Jewish messiah will come. The Muslim, though at first unaware whom he is dealing with, soon realizes they are Jews and curses them for asking "if a scattered folk, laughed to scorn, can be ingathered in a world reborn." Then:

> After the old man had roundly disowned us, the entire congregation would have stoned us. They spat on us, hooted us, booted us, dragged us hands and feet through street after street until, battered and blood-spattered we were flung at the gate of the city's magistrate.

The magistrate, however, a

> righteous Gentile, before whom we had been brought, could, at a glance, discern a man's most secret thought. At once, he took us to a private place and bade us tell him what had taken place—the which we did. Thereat he said, Peace be with you, do not fear; no harm shall come you here.

As the scholar Raymond Scheindlin has observed in commenting on this same passage, here in a nutshell are several key elements of the medieval Jewish-Muslim "symbiosis": Jews, "externally indistinguishable from the Muslim masses," who "circulate confidently among them without being aware of any need for caution" yet are "conscious of being members of a group with a different history and a different destiny"; Muslims who, though generally tolerant of Jews, turn murderous when the latter suggest that Judaism will reign supreme in the end; and a public official who understands that these Jews, though "they come close enough to the line to enrage the astrologer and the crowd . . . do not actually cross it (by, for example, openly blaspheming Islam or its prophet)" and so "do not forfeit their protected status." It was a complex world with subtle rules, and Jews lived in it, generally speaking, not badly, yet always asking themselves how it had happened that a fraudulent upstart of a religion, its sacred scriptures a parody of their own, was ruling over them and a vast tract of the earth.

THE ENCOUNTER between the astrologer and the rash Jews, related to Alharizi's narrator, Heman the Ezrahite, by his rogue, Hever the Kenite, is one of the few times in *The Tahkemoni* that Hever is bested by the locals. Usually, he manages to outthink, outtalk, and outfox them while gaining—if only until they realize, too late, that they have been hoodwinked—their sympathy, esteem, hospitality, and money.

Thus, in a typical episode, after bumping into Heman in the streets of "Rehovot" (some of Alharizi's locales are real places and others, like this one, are simply biblical names), Hever relates how he has conned an Arab peasant into treating him to a meal by pretending to be the treater himself. After dining with the man at a butcher's stall on

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succulent roast lamb and a dessert of dates that "leave a taste that lingers long after the silky jelly has slid down to the belly," Hever offers to fetch a jug of ice-water to wash it all down with.

> The rustic, all respect, did not object; so I hurried off and slipped behind the wall, waiting to see what would befall.
>
> The moments dragged; the farmer, with furrowed brow and a cough, readied to make off. But in one stride, the butcher was at his side. Seizing him by the sleeve he cried, Ho, ho, very funny! And where is my money?
>
> The rustic blustered, Please! Don't squeeze! I didn't order your meat: it was my friend's treat!
>
> At that the butcher struck the man's back a hearty thwack. Whoreson! Who asked you to come? And where do I know you from? Three dinars, you, before I belt your butt till you empty your stuffed gut!

The poor peasant pays up and Hever, who has enjoyed the scene without a qualm, says to Heman in the formal verse that a *maqama* often breaks into at climactic moments:

> All men are robbers, all men lie,
> so I betray each passerby.
> I net me lions in my sleep
> and tigers rend like mewling
> sheep.
> I make of the savant an earthen crock,
> the gray-haired sage a laughing-
> stock.

And, Heman informs the reader in the chapter's concluding line, "At that he turned aside, leaving me wide-eyed at his cunning and his bold displays, his wit and twisted ways."

Not all of Hever's ruses are as simple as this one, nor are all staged for material gain. He is a trickster who relishes the trick for its own sake, as in a chapter in which, finding out that Heman is setting out on a journey, he cross-dresses as a woman, seductively intercepts his unsuspecting friend in a field, and seduces him with tender words into such a state of physical passion that Heman begs to make love on the spot, whereupon:

> The maiden heard me to the last, then burst out laughing like a trumpet-blast, and seized me fast. Lo, she said, I rise to the task and do as you ask. Therewith she stepped back a pace, whisked the veil from off her face and—aagh! A gross mistake!—revealed a beard as thick and tangled as a writhing snake. A man!

In yet another chapter, Hever himself falls victim to the disguise of an old hag, dressed as a young beauty, who gets him to marry her and reveals herself on their wedding night as "A bitch, a witch, a dark misshape, an Afric ape!" Yet he quickly turns the tables:

> Half-berserk, I seized three sticks and set to work. In the dark of that cursed house I gagged her with her blouse, and laid on with many a thwack and crack until her heart's blood coursed down her neck and back. . . . Then taking all her clothes with me I loaded my mule and was gone well before dawn. Leaving behind a ravaged waste, I rode in haste: by day I slept and by night rode fast, crossing deserts and forest till all danger [of being forced to honor his marriage contract] had passed.

And Heman remarks:

> Hearing Hever the Kenite's misrepresentations, his mad concoctions, his ludicrous fabrications, I laughed my fill, then bade him goodbye, and off went I; and off went he—dreams, wit, and wondrous falsity.

IN ONE of the many illuminating commentaries appearing in an appendix to his translation, Segal dwells on the misogyny of this story's ending. But there is, I think, something more interesting about it than that—namely, Heman's concluding doubts about whether it is true. On the face of it, this chapter is anomalous, showing Hever, who can use words to master any situation, being so badly fooled that he must resort to physical force; yet Heman's final lines cause the reader to suspect that here, too, the real point is Hever's verbal wizardry, which tricks Heman into believing, until the last moment, that a tall tale is a factual account.

The magical power of words is what *The Tahkemoni* is all about. Many of its chapters are not tales of trickery in the narrow sense at all, but rather descriptions of contests and virtuoso displays of rhetoric in which Hever shines or comes out the winner. In one episode, he succeeds at the seemingly impossible task of making the case for stinginess sound as noble as the case for generosity; in a second, he brilliantly meets a challenge to improvise a long riff of rhymed prose in which the letter "O" (in Al-harizi's Hebrew, the consonant *resh*) appears in every word, after which he reverses himself and composes a second passage in which it is totally absent; still elsewhere, he ad-libs a lengthy and metrically impeccable poem that makes perfect sense when read

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from beginning to end and equal but opposite sense when read from end to beginning. There is nothing he cannot do with language; no one he cannot persuade of the truth of whatever he wishes.

Ultimately, in Alharizi as in al-Hariri and other Arabic *maqamat*, truth itself dissolves and vanishes beneath the surface dazzle of language. There is a scene in *The Tahkemoni* in which Heman, going to a tavern after despairing of being on the wagon, finds the tavern-goers conversing about the virtues of drink. After a while, an "old graybeard" sitting in a corner exclaims, "You call this praise of Wine, the unmatched scion of the vine? A pity on sickly phrases trotted out and driven about"; proceeds to offer a stirring encomium to alcohol; and then turns around and delivers an equally splendid tirade against it. The tavern-goers are so befuddled that, as Heman describes it, "Cups were emptied with assiduity as many swore off wine in perpetuity."

The graybeard, needless to say, is revealed to be, once again, Hever the Kenite. Since his audiences believe everything he says, they can in the end believe nothing. Even when he utters conventional pieties, as in a chapter in which he sings the praises of Moses, there is no knowing whether he is sincere or not. At first glance a collection of lighthearted entertainments, *The Tahkemoni* thus turns out to be a ruthlessly cynical, almost nihilistic, work. Words, it suggests, are all there is—and words are never to be wholly trusted.

This—the underlying message, it would seem, of the entire genre of the *maqama*—spoke keenly to the reader of the age.

IT WAS an age, the histories of philosophy tell us, of great intellectual accomplishment. Al-Farabi (c. 872-950), Ibn Sina (980-1037), al-Ghazali (1058-1111), Ibn Rushd (1126-1198): these, the great figures of medieval Arabic thought, are—as Alfarabius, Avicenna, Algazeli, and Averroes—revered names in the annals of European philosophy as well. Together with Jewish thinkers like Ibn Gabirol (c. 1021-1058) and Maimonides (1135-1204), they were the men who took the philosophical traditions of the Greeks, Platonic, Neoplatonic, and Aristotelian; reworked and synthesized them with the belief systems of monotheism; and heavily influenced, via Latin translations, a Christian world that was stimulated by them to produce an Abelard (1079-1142), a Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a Duns Scotus (1266-1308), and a William of Ockham (1285-1349).

Yet Muslim and Christian philosophy had different fates. In Christian Europe, philosophizing never stopped; the scholastic tradition evolved into the thought of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance, influencing figures like Descartes and Spinoza and, through them, their successors. In the Arab world, by contrast, rigorous philosophy ended in the 14th century. Its last representative, Ibn Taymiya, was an anti-philosophical philosopher who argued that philosophy could say nothing about ultimate realities, the only reliable guide to which was revealed religion.

Ibn Taymiya was not the first Muslim philosopher to take such a position. That honor goes to the 11th-century al-Ghazali, a far greater thinker whose *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, an attack on al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, had an enormous impact on Islamic intellectuals of his day. It was not al-Ghazali's contention in this book that, when a literal reading of the Qur'an clashed with philosophical ideas, the Qur'an could be logically proved right; it was sufficient to show, he maintained, that it could not be logically proved wrong. The fact that the philosophers could not agree among themselves—"their floundering about is lengthy, their disputes many, their views spread far apart, their ways divergent and convergent," he wrote in his rhymed prose introduction to *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*—demonstrated that their methods could be used to argue anything and its opposite. "I have seen a group," he says of them,

> who, believing themselves in possession of a distinctiveness from companion and peer by virtue of a superior quick wit and intelligence, have rejected the Islamic duties. . . . There is no basis for their unbelief other than . . . speculative investigation, an outcome of their stumbling over the tails of sophistical doubts that divert from the direction of the truth, and their being deceived by embellished imaginings akin to the glitter of the mirage. . . . What rank in God's world is there lower than the rank of one who adorns himself with the abandonment of the true by the hasty embracing of the false as true, accepting it without report and verification?

If we substitute rhetoric for logic, wandering rogues for philosophers, and gullible audiences for readers, are we not back in the world of the *maqama*?

NO HISTORIAN would claim that the collapse of medieval Arabic philosophy was due simply to al-Ghazali's and others' attacks on it. There were many reasons why the Arab world, more intellectually advanced than the Christian world for centuries, eventually fell behind and succumbed to a numbing religious orthodoxy from which it has not

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freed itself to this day. And yet it is interesting that the 11th and 12th centuries, the period in which an anti-philosophical philosophy first joined hands with religious orthodoxy to deny the validity of philosophical thought, was also a period in which the literature of the *maqama*, from an entirely different angle, cast comic doubt on the trustworthiness of language and on the possibility of unraveling truth from untruth in its workings.

It has sometimes been said by Western observers trying to explain the intellectual underdevelopment of the Arab world that Arabic is a highly rhetorical language in which it is impossible to be intellectually precise. Linguistically, this is nonsense; Arabic, like any language, is a tool that can be used badly or well and that, when used well, as it certainly was by great philosophers like Ibn Sina or al-Ghazali, is as capable of precision as any language. Still, the observation has merit if rephrased to state that Arab culture has tended to use language, both orally and in writing, far more for purely rhetorical ends than has, say, Western culture.

This is hardly an original Western insight. As the literature of the *maqama* illustrates, even when reflected through a Hebrew work like Alharizi's *Tahkemoni*, the prominence of rhetoric in Arab culture is something of which the Arabs themselves have long been aware, just as they have been aware that the rhetorical abuse of words has a paradoxical result: while on the surface it glorifies language and those with the most adroit command of it, beneath the surface it undermines all faith in language as a reliable vehicle for expression and thought.

Again: no historian would claim that there is any simple explanation for *this* phenomenon, either. Yet a factor contributing to it—one that, for perhaps obvious reasons, has not been stressed—is surely the Qur'an itself, a highly rhetorical text when compared with either the Hebrew Bible or the Greek New Testament. When such a text is adopted as the sacred scripture of a culture, over which it exerts enormous influence and serves as the ultimate standard of eloquence, this is bound to have an effect.

It cannot be maintained, of course, that the Hebrew Bible lacks lengthy rhetorical passages; its prophetic literature, while often extremely powerful, consists of little else. But the Bible also contains numerous books of narrative and religious poetry in which language is used with terse precision and with great impact, challenging our logical and imaginative faculties to unpack its density. The Qur'an, though much of its material is taken from the Bible, has nothing of the sort. To take one of many possible examples, one need only compare the Qur'an's verbose and dramatically flat treatment in Sura 12 of the story of Joseph and his brothers with the concise aesthetic marvel of this narrative in Genesis in order to appreciate the difference.

It is the Qur'an, I have said, that is the real object of Alharizi's remark that al-Hariri's "vessel is with Hebrew sailors manned." Alharizi certainly knew the Qur'an, and knew that, as a text for an entire culture to feed off over the ages, it lacked the Bible's nutritional value. It was that which helped give him the confidence to take an Arabic genre and turn it into a Hebrew one in which the Bible is as present on every page as the Qur'an is in al-Hariri. And it was that, too, which helped give Jews in Islamic society the strength to maintain their religion and identity in a situation in which, although it could have been worse, they were a looked-down-upon minority dominated by a world-conquering and world-embracing faith. Unlike the rogue of the *maqama*, they believed the truth was on their side and would prevail.

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Revisiting Israel's "Original Sin"

The Strange Case of Benny Morris

Efraim Karsh

THE LATE 1980's saw the rise in Israel of a school of "new historians"—younger, Left-leaning academics whose aim was to place under severe question the accepted history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Basing themselves ostensibly on recently declassified documents from the Mandate period and the early days of the state, they systematically redrew the history of Zionism, turning upside down the saga of Israel's struggle for survival.

Scanted in these revisionist accounts were the Arabs' outspoken commitment to the destruction of the Jewish national cause; the sustained and repeated Arab efforts to achieve that end from the early 1920's onward; and the no less sustained efforts of the Jews at peaceful coexistence. Zionism emerged, instead, as an aggressive and expansionist movement, an offshoot of European imperialism at its most rapacious. And if Israel was to be seen as an "aggressive and overbearing military superpower" (in the representative words of one new historian), then the Palestinian Arabs, "by any reckoning, [could] only be seen as the victims."

Although never exactly reaching mainstream status themselves, the new historians nevertheless exercised a profound impact on mainstream Israeli opinion in the years just prior to the 1993 Oslo peace accords and thereafter. Fatigued by decades of struggle, yearning for normalcy, despairing of any resolution of the conflict with the Arabs, and abashed by the growing anti-Israel mood among "progressive" opinion-makers worldwide, many educated Israelis found themselves receptive to the notion that a large portion of the fault for the conflict lay with their own country's actions, and might therefore be rectified by a radical change in behavior. If a historic reconciliation with the Arabs could not be achieved through a policy of military deterrence, might not a new start be made by taking positive steps to accommodate Arab demands, by acknowledging Israeli guilt for Arab suffering, and by striving through political and territorial concessions to mitigate the "original sin" of the Jewish state's very existence?

This mindset helps explain, at least in part, the headlong embrace by so many educated Israelis of the Oslo peace process, and the readiness to see in it the long-sought solution to the problem of Arab intransigence. Once having committed themselves to the idea that peace had broken out, moreover, many Israelis proved unable to relinquish it, even in the face of Yasir Arafat's brazen flouting of the solemn obligations he undertook on behalf of the Palestinian people at the September 1993 ceremonies on the White House lawn.

Paradoxically, for these true believers in Oslo, Palestinian violence and bad faith made it more necessary than ever to cling to the idea of Jewish

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culpability. Arab grievance, the thinking seemed to go, being rooted in Israeli aggression, could be overcome only by still further acts of appeasement and concession. As the 90's wore on, the new historians' interpretation of the conflict thus became even more deeply entrenched in Israeli thinking, disseminated widely by the media and making its way into the educational curriculum at every level. Not until Arafat launched his all-out *intifada* in September 2000 did reality at last begin to intrude, and a serious process of reconsideration begin.

AMONG THE new historians, none has been more visible, or more influential, than Benny Morris, a professor at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba. Morris's 1987 book, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, was a sensation, rapidly establishing itself as a definitive account of one of the central issues in the entire Arab-Israeli conflict: the flight and dispersion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs at the end of the British Mandate and during the two years of Israel's war of independence. *In Israel's Border Wars* (1993), Morris went on to indict Israel's response in the early 1950's to Palestinian and Arab terrorism. More sweepingly, in *Righteous Victims* (1999), he undertook to describe the entire Palestinian-Zionist conflict ever since 1881 as an anti-colonial struggle by an indigenous population against "a colonizing and expansionist ideology and movement . . . intent on politically, or even physically, dispossessing and supplanting the Arabs."

With their seemingly authoritative shifting of the blame for the entire conflict onto Zionist shoulders, Morris's books and essays became powerful weapons in the arsenal of Palestinian propagandists and anti-Israel forces everywhere. But then, suddenly, Morris himself changed. In late 2001, a year into the *intifada*, he shocked an audience in Berkeley, California by declaring that he now saw things differently. To his stunned listeners, who had come to hear him reinforce his wonted message of Jewish guilt, he announced that the truth was otherwise. Ever since the 1930's, the Jews had been amenable to a negotiated settlement in the Middle East, while the Palestinians had stubbornly spurned every compromise:

> They rejected the Peel commission partition plan of 1937 (a Jewish state in 20 percent of the territory of Palestine, in the area around what is now Tel Aviv and the Galilee). They turned down the 1947 United Nations partition plan (an Arab state in 40 percent of the territory). They did not want to hear about the autonomy plan of [Anwar] Sadat and [Menachem] Begin (part of the 1978 Camp David agreements but never implemented). They evaded accepting Bill Clinton's generous offer (95 percent of the West Bank).

Nor, as it turned out, was Berkeley a one-time aberration. A few months later, in the leftist London *Guardian*, Morris warmed to his theme, instructing his readers that "the Zionist movement agreed to give up its dream of a 'Greater Israel' and to divide Palestine with the Arabs" as long ago as the 1930's and 40's. "Unfortunately," he went on,

> the Palestinian national movement, from its inception, has denied the Zionist movement any legitimacy and stuck fast to the vision of a "Greater Palestine," meaning a Muslim-Arab-populated and Arab-controlled state in all of Palestine, perhaps with some Jews being allowed to stay on as a religious minority. In 1988-93, in a brief flicker on the graph, Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization seemed to have acquiesced in the idea of a compromise. But since 2000 the dominant vision of a "Greater Palestine" has surged back to the fore.

"One wonders," he ended mordantly, "whether the pacific asseverations of 1988-1993 were not merely diplomatic camouflage."

What was going on? Morris himself would subsequently trace his "serious reexamination" of his political assumptions to "Palestinian behavior during the past three years"—i.e., to the *intifada*. But he also went further, claiming that his "decades" of studying the conflict had instilled in him "a sense of the instinctive rejectionism that runs like a dark thread through Palestinian history—a rejection, to the point of absurdity, of the history of the Jewish link to the land of Israel; a rejection of the legitimacy of Jewish claims to Palestine; a rejection of the right of the Jewish state to exist."

But why, then, had it taken him so long to acknowledge a truth he was now claiming to have known for decades? This is a question Morris has yet to address frankly. And it is not the only question that might be asked of him. Without for a moment discounting the significance of his public turnabout, which, given his prominence, is certainly a very welcome development, one is bound to point out that it has not led him seriously to reassess, let alone to retract, any of his previous writings on the sources of the conflict or its main events. He may have discovered an "instinctive re-

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jectionism" among the Palestinians; he has yet to rethink what this means for the conclusions of his own books and essays.

A GOOD place to begin such a rethinking would be with his first and still most influential work, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*. A few years ago, Morris made the startling statement that, in preparing this volume, he had had "no access to the materials in the IDFA [Israel Defense Force Archive] or Hagana Archive and precious little to first-hand military materials deposited elsewhere." Nevertheless, he reassured his readers, "the new materials I have seen over the past few years tend to confirm and reinforce the major lines of description and analysis, and the conclusions, in *The Birth*."

This, however, is very damning. What made Morris a "new" historian was precisely the opportunity to study newly available documentary evidence, and on that basis to reevaluate older readings. As Morris himself put it in the introduction to *The Birth*: "The recent declassification and opening of most Israeli state and private political papers from 1947 to 1949 and the concurrent opening of state papers in Britain . . . and the United States . . . has made possible the writing of a history of what happened on the basis of a large body of primary, contemporary source material."

Yet now here he was, freely admitting that he had not "had access" to—elsewhere he says he "was not aware of"—the voluminous documents in the archives of the specific Israeli institutions whose actions in 1947-49 formed the burden of his indictment! Misleading his readers, he instead published a book based on partial and thoroughly shoddy research and informed by a preconceived view of his sweepingly revisionist conclusions.

Most damning of all, the documents that Morris failed to consult, far from tending "to confirm and reinforce" his analysis, do quite the opposite. What they confirm, in line with all previous evidence, is that "the Palestinian refugee problem" was the creation of Palestinian and other Arab leaders, not of the Zionists.*

The issue of the refugees of 1947-49 is tied up with the larger question of Zionist attitudes toward the Arabs—another subject on which Morris had a lot to say in his days as a new historian. In fact, he went out of his way to give scholarly credibility to the Arab canard of an age-old Zionist design to dispossess the Palestinian Arabs from their homes. As far back as the mid-1930's, he wrote, Zionist leaders had despaired of achieving a Jewish majority in Palestine through mass immigration and had instead come to view the expulsion of the Arab population—"transfer," as it came to be known—as the best means "to establish a Jewish state without an Arab minority, or with as small an Arab minority as possible." By 1947, despite their formal acceptance of the partition resolution of the United Nations (proposing two states, Arab and Jewish, in Palestine), "large sections of Israeli society" were looking forward to war with the Arabs "as an ideal opportunity to expand the new state's borders beyond the UN-earmarked partition boundaries and at the expense of the Palestinians."

Morris adduced no evidence whatsoever for these claims. Nor could he have, for there is none. In reality, far from despairing of mass immigration, Zionist leaders in the 30's worried about the country's short-term absorptive capacity should millions of Jews decide to come. In 1947, not one of these leaders evinced the slightest intention of exploiting the UN partition plan as a springboard for territorial expansion. As for an alleged enthusiasm for "transfer," so flimsy is the evidence for this that Morris was forced to adduce a small number of statements, mostly by David Ben-Gurion, that he either ripped out of context or simply rewrote to say what the speaker plainly did not mean.

A few examples. In an October 1937 letter to his son, Ben-Gurion said: "We do not wish and do not need to expel Arabs and take their place. All our aspiration is built on the assumption—proven throughout all our activity—that there is enough room for ourselves and the Arabs in Palestine." In *The Birth*, Morris represents Ben-Gurion as saying precisely the opposite: "We must expel Arabs and take their place." (Tellingly, in his Hebrew-language writings, Morris rendered Ben-Gurion's words accurately, perhaps because he knew his readers would check the original for themselves.)

Again: on June 7, 1938, Ben-Gurion took part in a meeting of the Jewish Agency executive. Here is a portion of the transcript:

> The starting point for a solution of the question of the Arabs in the Jewish state is, in his [i.e., Ben-Gurion's] view, the need to prepare the ground for an Arab-Jewish agreement.

And here is Morris's paraphrase of Ben-Gurion's position at that meeting:

> "The starting point for a solution of the Arab problem in the Jewish state" was the conclusion of an agreement with the Arab states that

* For more on this, see my articles in COMMENTARY, "Were the Palestinians Expelled?" (July-August 2000) and "The Palestinians and the 'Right of Return'" (May 2001).

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> would pave the way for a transfer of the Arabs out of the Jewish state to the Arab countries.

The mention of a transfer agreement is entirely of Morris's invention.

Finally, here is Ben-Gurion speaking to an Israeli cabinet meeting of June 16, 1948, a month after the establishment of the state:

> But war is war. We did not start the war. They made the war. [Arab] Jaffa waged war on us, [Arab] Haifa waged war on us, [Arab] Beit-Shean waged war on us. And I do not want them again to make war.

And here is Morris's fanciful rendition, complete with an addition of his own:

> But war is war. We did not start the war. They made the war. Jaffa went to war against us. So did Haifa. *And I do not want those who fled to return.* I do not want them again to make war. [emphasis added]

Now that Morris has acknowledged Zionism's longstanding acceptance of coexistence with the Arabs in a partitioned Palestine, has he disowned the "transfer" canard? That depends on where you look. Already in the late 1990's he was forced to concede that his "treatment of transfer thinking before 1948 was, indeed, superficial" and that he had "stretched" evidence to make his point. But less than a year ago, in the *Guardian*, he was still writing baldly:

> The idea of transfer is as old as modern Zionism and has accompanied its evolution and praxis during the past century. And driving it was an iron logic: there could be no viable Jewish state in all or part of Palestine unless there was a mass displacement of Arab inhabitants.

Morris has squared these contradictory ideas in a novel manner. He now believes, or pretends to believe, that there was nothing fundamentally *wrong* with the notion of a mass displacement of Arabs, as long as it was born of dire necessity. Indeed, he says, over the long term such a displacement might even have been conducive to peace. Thus, he speculates, if Ben-Gurion were alive today, he might "regret his restraint" in 1948, when he "probably could have engineered a comprehensive rather than a partial transfer . . . , but refrained." Perhaps, according to Morris,

> had [Ben-Gurion] gone the whole hog, today's Middle East would be a healthier, less violent place, with a Jewish state between Jordan and the Mediterranean and a Palestinian Arab state in Transjordan.

The trouble with these musings is that Ben-Gurion did *not* engineer a partial transfer in 1948; nor, so far as we know, did it ever occur to him to do so; nor did Morris himself charge him with doing so in *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*. Morris's bizarre latter-day endorsement of such an idea puts him in company not with Israel's founding father but with the late Rehavam Ze'evi, a right-wing advocate of population transfer who similarly considered his policy to be compatible with Zionist thinking. He and Morris make strange ideological bedfellows, but, when it comes to their notion of traditional Zionism, they are both dead wrong.

IT IS not just in connection with the more distant past that Morris's political conversion seems less than thorough. Indeed, at the very moment when he was speaking in Berkeley and condemning Arafat and the Palestinians for turning their backs on peace, he was also releasing an updated edition of *Righteous Victims* that offered an account of the latest *intifada* much more in keeping with his past writings. Here the organized Palestinian violence appears not as another manifestation of the historic Arab/Palestinian refusal to come to terms with Israel's existence but as a long-overdue act of desperation by a tormented nation against its occupier:

> At base, the frustrations and slights endured since the signing in 1993 of the Oslo agreement and, more generally, since the start of the occupation in 1967, had now come home to roost. Indeed, the new *intifada* seemed to give release to the pent-up anger of the Palestinians since their initial confrontations with Zionism and the catastrophic loss of Palestine in 1948.

Nor did Morris leave any doubt as to where, in his view, the fault for the *intifada* lay:

> Oslo heightened [Palestinian] expectations of an immediate improvement and release from political bondage. But as one government succeeded another in Jerusalem and as partial agreement succeeded partial agreement, nothing seemed to improve; the longed-for sovereignty and economic boom failed to materialize. . . . By Sep-

* Here are the words of Mamduh Nawfal, a leading PLO thinker and Arafat adviser: "The *intifada* was neither a mass movement detached from the Palestinian Authority nor an instinctive popular uprising. Quite the contrary, it was started by a deliberate decision by the highest echelons of the Authority before being transformed into a popular movement."

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tember 2000, the masses apparently had reached a point where they could no longer wait.

This happens to be a complete inversion of the truth, as Morris himself obviously knows and as even some prominent Palestinians have had the honesty to admit.* Arafat's war was, in fact, an unwelcome development for ordinary Palestinians, who were in the midst of a healthy recovery after several years of a deep economic crisis. So lacking was the appetite for confrontation that, upon Arafat's return from Camp David in July 2000, his Tanzim militia barely managed to muster some 200 youths in Ramallah for what was supposed to be a "mass welcome for the returning Saladin." Likewise, the attempt to organize a commercial strike in East Jerusalem in protest against Ehud Barak's government ended in embarrassing failure, one of many indications that the vast majority of East Jerusalem's Arab population preferred the continuation of Israeli rule to Palestinian sovereignty.

Not only does Morris know all this, he has even said so, including in the selfsame revised edition of *Righteous Victims*. There he writes, accurately enough, that "for many Palestinians life had been better under direct Israeli rule" than under Arafat's "despotic and corrupt" Palestinian Authority. Commenting last year on the collapse of Oslo, moreover, he offered this description of what really happened at Camp David and immediately thereafter: "Barak, a sincere and courageous leader, offered Arafat a reasonable peace agreement. . . . Arafat rejected the offer. . . . Instead of continuing to negotiate, the Palestinians—with the agile Arafat both riding the tiger and pulling the strings behind the scenes—launched the *intifada*."

That he can simultaneously entertain, and express, such wildly discrepant views opens Morris to the charge not just of shoddiness but of doublespeak.

THIS PERSISTENT sense of confusion—to use a milder word than doublespeak—reflects the real dilemma in which Morris finds himself. Arafat's war of terror is what drove this new historian to acknowledge truths about the Arab-Israel conflict to which he had willfully turned a blind eye. He has paid a professional price for his apostasy from his former beliefs, coming under vicious fire from his fellow new historians and, in the process, losing his luster as a hero of the academic Left in Israel and abroad. But he has evidently not yet taken in what it means, intellectually, to surrender the paradigm that for so many decades has informed not only his work but his entire view of the world—of who he is and what he believes.

And herein lies, as well, the emblematic importance of Morris's case. For his is the dilemma of the Israeli Left in general and the "peace" movement in particular: shocked by the *intifada* into a recognition of the country's true situation, but not yet prepared to embrace wholeheartedly the justice of the country's cause. To this dangerous condition of moral paralysis, the lies and distortions of the new historians have made a significant contribution over the years, and none more significant than that made by Benny Morris. The damage they have done lingers on.

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OBSERVATIONS

Bellow's Progress

Algis Valiunas

ON THE fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Adventures of Augie March*, the Library of America has made Saul Bellow the first living novelist to be admitted to its literary pantheon. The anniversary volume includes not only that breakthrough 1953 work but the two lesser known novels that preceded it, *Dangling Man* (1944) and *The Victim* (1947).* It thus offers a fitting occasion to ask how he got here from there.

Bellow has not exactly disowned his two earliest novels, but he has made it clear that they were apprentice efforts, and that only with *Augie March* did he begin to command the voice for which he is renowned. The difference between the first two and the third stems in part from his evolving attitude toward his own Jewishness. In his 2000 biography of the novelist, James Atlas records that during his senior year at Northwestern University, Bellow had sought career guidance from the English-department chairman, and was told to forget about trying to make a profession in the field: "You weren't born to it." Although other intellectual disciplines might be suitable for Jews to pursue, English literature was the preserve of those who had some native claim to it.

Evidently, the encounter helped spur the young Bellow to demonstrate his ability to wield the language as deftly as anyone going, and the result was an early prose style chiseled to "a Flaubertian standard." Only after he had proved his mastery of the high literary mode could he begin to write in his own distinctive idiom.

This is not to say that *Dangling Man* and *The Victim* are mere training exercises. If the Bellow style had yet to acquire its racy comic ease, the Bellow mind—the most formidable intelligence since Melville's to turn its attention to writing American novels—was already engaged. From the opening paragraph of *Dangling Man*, the reader is in the presence of a voice that claims the authority of irrepressible feeling and penetrating thought.

Bellow's protagonist, Joseph—he appears without surname and without even an identifying initial—is keeping a journal while waiting for the military bureaucracy to approve his induction into the wartime army. His wife, Iva, has taken over the role of breadwinner, giving him the leisure to pursue his solitary mental life. Thus dangling between peace and war, Joseph kicks around Bellow's Chicago, which already in this first work has the novelist's trademark on it: a Hyde Park rooming-house with a skulking alcoholic neighbor who flings his empties out the window and declines to shut the door when using the communal toilet; a beanery that used to hum with high-minded talk but now is dismally quiet; the house of a prosperous sibling whose fancy trappings reproach Joseph for his unworldly fecklessness even as they incite him to open disdain; the apartment of a kittenish young woman up the street who sets Joseph's blood to boil; a butterfly he spies on a March day, "out of place both in the season and the heart of the city, and somehow alien to the whole condition of the century."

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Even though Joseph will soon enough join the faceless millions in uniform whose sole thought is to avoid being pierced, splintered, or blown up, he refuses to be deterred from the essential concern of his life: "I must know what I myself am." The political life, the life of the citizen who takes part in the general tumult of his time and place, he sees as unspeakable irrelevance. Nor has the war with all its mass horror changed the essential terms of the human arrangement: death has always been there, waiting for everyone. Real life is still to be had strictly on terms the individual sets for himself.

In the end, inevitably, there is an explosion. A confrontation with an officious bank employee leads to a bitter argument with Iva, a tirade against Joseph's drunken neighbor, and a narrowly averted brawl with his landlord, a retired army captain. Giving up, Joseph enlists. "Perhaps the war could teach me, by violence, what I had been unable to learn during those months in the room."

If in such sentiments the deep thinker seems preposterously obtuse, speaking of war as if it were some especially challenging postgraduate tutorial, arranged for his benefit, Joseph's sense of what is at stake, Bellow suggests, is not entirely fatuous: the freedom to follow one's thoughts wherever they lead, to become whatever one wishes, is not negligible, and might just be the essential thing. It might even be the thing the war itself is ultimately about. Welcoming his submission to the hard rule of a mass life confronting mass death, Joseph celebrates with ironic zest: "Long live regimentation!" At least his wearisome dangling days are over.

JOSEPH IS an early prototype of a whole succession of big-time reasoners in Bellow's work (the best known of whom is surely the eponymous hero of the 1964 *Herzog*), each of them destined to find out the hard way what true seriousness means. In *The Victim*, Bellow introduced a different but no less characteristic theme: the lurking menace of the city—New York, in this case—where the individual is threatened by the overwhelming human multitude, and associates from business acquaintances to blood brothers can turn mortal enemies.

Dominating the moral landscape of *The Victim* is the barrier between Jew and Gentile, so knife-edged in Bellow's rendering *circa* 1947 as to be all but unthinkable today. Asa Leventhal, an editor at a Manhattan trade magazine, finds himself hounded by the hard-drinking down-and-out Kirby Allbee, who emerges like an avenging apparition from an evening crowd and proceeds to blame Leventhal for all that has gone wrong with his life.

In an incident that Leventhal can barely remember, Allbee claims to have gone out of his way to set up a job interview that Leventhal botched so badly as to get himself thrown out by Allbee's boss and, not long afterward, Allbee himself fired, punished for Leventhal's churlish behavior. Worse, Allbee is sure that Leventhal went into the interview with the express intention of disgracing him for having drunk too much at a party and launched into a harangue on the perfidiousness of Jews. Even now Allbee cannot stop talking about the Jews, not even when the conscience-stricken Leventhal, troubled by the thought that he may inadvertently have caused Allbee's skid into alcoholism and poverty, takes the poor slob into his home and tries to help him back on his feet.

This bizarre *pas de deux* takes place against the backdrop of a teeming urban life, conjured up in the novel's superb opening lines. (It begins: "On some nights New York is as hot as Bangkok.") For a man like Leventhal, accustomed to a steady round and intent on keeping his feet in the roiling city, it is radically disorienting to have to imagine his way into the lives of other human beings, especially "the lost, the outcast, the overcome, the effaced, the ruined." Yet just when he is about to dismiss Allbee's hectoring importunity, he has a vision of the Gentile's descent from a comfortable existence not unlike his own, and is washed by fellow feeling. At one point, Allbee launches into a loony gloss on the New Testament injunction to love your neighbor as yourself. This, indeed, is Bellow's motif in *The Victim*, as well as the exacting yardstick by which he measures his characters. But he understands all too well that there is such a thing as an excess of compassion, and that it can sink you.

Behind the madcap story looms the Holocaust. Bellow mentions it but once, when Allbee taunts Leventhal with the Jews' alleged reputation for timid prudence, for staying out of the way of trouble; Leventhal replies, heartsick and angered, "Millions of us have been killed. What about that?" The unanswered question rings in the mind like the distant blows of a hammer, only to strike again when, years later, Leventhal encounters Allbee for a final time. They meet in a crowded theater. Elegantly dressed, Allbee has on his arm a well-known actress, past her prime but still beautiful. He has reached an accord, he tells Leventhal, with the powers that run things, and is no longer angry at the world. As he hurries back into the theater, Leventhal calls after him, "Wait a minute, what's your idea of who runs things?"

Allbee has gotten over his suffering; the victim has found another victim, and has come to terms with those mysterious governing powers. He knows his place among the millions. Leventhal, tormented by the particular six million, is unwilling to make his peace. There is no doubt who Bellow intends us to think is the better man, even if the lesser man has the wisdom of the world on his side, and will clearly have the easier time of it.

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AND THEN came *The Adventures of Augie March*, the book in which Bellow at last set himself squarely against the accommodating wisdom of the world even as he presented that world more enticingly than ever before. The novel shows Bellow in an altogether venturesome mode. Taking traditional literary vessels—Romantic autobiography and the *Bildungsroman* as worked by Rousseau, Goethe, Flaubert, and Tolstoy—he filled them to the brim with rumbustious life from the old neighborhood of Chicago's Jewish west side, then poured and poured until they overflowed with reclusive millionaires, wacky scientists, Trotskyists, union goons, clueless highbrows, daring hobos, rich girls with schemes for a vivid life, poor girls with schemes for getting rich, and other American types from sea to shining sea.

In language, style, and vision, *Augie March* is at once unabashedly Jewish and wholly American; it is impossible to say where the one leaves off and the other begins. The novel opens, famously, with "I am an American, Chicago born," and closes with Augie's declaration that he is "a sort of Columbus of those near-at-hand." Through Augie, Bellow intended nothing less than to reveal the thrilling vastness of the nation to Americans themselves, who may never have suspected the richness of its underbelly existence, or who had turned away from it in distaste and horror.

Unlike Joseph in *Dangling Man*, Augie *embraces* the freedom to recoil from the life that others are living—as well as from their efforts to get him to join them—and to make himself what he wants to be. True, since he has an agreeable disposition, he does allow himself to be talked into all sorts of things; but he is at heart an oppositionist who will not lop off some essential part of his nature to fit someone else's idea of what he ought to be.

Augie will need that refractory stubbornness, because almost everyone does know what is best for him. Grandma Lausch, the old harridan who boards with the Marches—Augie, his mother, and his two brothers, one an idiot, their father having skipped out long ago—exercises a sour tutelage over the boys, schooling them in the caginess and outright flim-flam required for urban survival. The Renlings, purveyors of gilt-edged sporting goods to the nobs in the North Shore suburbs, hire the young Augie to work in their store and proceed to "glamorize" him, dressing him up, paying for his riding lessons, insisting he take night courses at Northwestern, wiping out any hint of his unseemly provenance. When he bolts for Einhorn's poolroom, the toughs there sing the delights of the criminal life; Augie tags along until Einhorn himself, a crippled neighborhood magnate, warns him of the grief he is letting himself in for. Soon he becomes sidekick to a would-be smuggler of human cargo from Canada; when the smuggler gets caught, Augie has to hop freights from Buffalo back to Chicago and endure a beating from his brother Simon. Then he takes to stealing books for an intellectual clientele and winds up reading them himself, creating a serious cash-flow problem but transforming his life.

If criminality is not Augie's dish, reading discloses a world of spiritual possibility. The results make themselves felt in his prose style, flecked with allusions to the titans of mind and action alike. Socrates and Alcibiades become as real to him as the bagmen and scroungers he grew up among:

> If you want to pick your own ideal creature in the mirror coastal air and sharp leaves of ancient perfection and be at home where a great mankind was at home, I've never seen any reason why not. Though unable to go along one hundred percent with a man like the Rev. Beecher telling his congregation, "Ye are Gods, you are crystalline, your faces are radiant!" I'm not an optimist of that degree, from the actual faces, congregated or separate, that I've seen.

Being an American, Augie figures out, even one from the dirt-end of town, enables one to be a Greek sage or warrior, or to cultivate any other strain one happens to share with one's distinguished predecessors.

WHILE STILL in the process of writing *Augie March*, Bellow referred to it as a study of "the Machiavellian dialectic in American society." By Machiavellianism he meant something more than the common notion of ruthless skullduggery—though that was part of it. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli had undertaken to liberate mankind—Bellow once called this "the biggest jailbreak ever"—from the confining morality of the Bible and classical moral philosophy. Whereas Moses and Plato and Jesus and Aristotle held men back from pursuing their "natural and ordinary desire to acquire" wealth, power, renown, or sexual pleasure, Machiavelli told them to grab all they wanted of whatever they wanted in the only life they were ever going to have. In a letter to his editor, Bellow said that "the greatest Machiavellian of them all" in his novel-in-progress was Augie's brother Simon, who wants to shine with distinction, to stand apart from the crowd, and to savor all the perquisites attending such a position.

As a boy, indeed, Simon considers himself fashioned for a rare and noble fate—for "What did Danton lose his head for, or why was there a Napoleon, if it wasn't to make a nobility of us all?" In time, however, his ambition decays into crassness. Simon works like a dog, ever angling for the main chance. When he marries into a rich family, he coaxes Augie into following his example. At first Augie obliges: he woos Simon's wife's cousin, curries favor with her elders, labors in Si-

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mon's coalyard. But the deal is inevitably queered, the family romance is off, and the brothers part ways, Simon to chase money and skirt, Augie to discover "the axial lines of life" where energy, nobility, and love converge, and where he will at last meet a fate good enough for him.

Augie March's life is anything but an august march, a ceremonious processional. It is a wild career. But it proves to be the life he wants, and his triumph at the end represents Bellow's imagination at its most joyous and avid. Augie does become nothing more or less than himself, and in so doing makes the reader want to hug America, and Bellow too.

In fact, many readers did just that. The critical reception of *Augie March* was a nearly unanimous whoop and halloo of delight—Delmore Schwartz in *Partisan Review* thought the novel better than *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Lionel Trilling wrote to Bellow's editor that "it's Saul's gift to see life everywhere," and the novel won the National Book Award. But there were some dissenters. The English author V.S. Pritchett lamented Bellow's "self-intoxicating style," while, closer to home, Norman Podhoretz, despite words of praise for the novelist's premonition of "what a real American idiom might look like," had similar reservations: "The feeling conveyed by Mr. Bellow's exuberance is an overwhelming impulse to get in as many adjectives and details as possible, regardless of consideration of rhythm, modulation, or, for that matter, meaning." As for Augie himself, Podhoretz dismissed him as a cartoon character who comes up grinning preposterously after being pancaked by anvil after falling anvil.

There is something to this. *Augie March* does occasionally verge on an overload of oddball rhetorical inventiveness, of descriptive coloration, of picaresque incident. But, to my mind, if Bellow errs on the side of richness, he does so in the manner of a picture by Hogarth. *Augie* is something like a naturalistic novel, but its naturalism has been given a comic soaking in rainbow dyes—as if Theodore Dreiser and Stephen Crane had fallen under the influence of Rabelais, another writer who loved to pile up words in fantastic heaps and who thereby honored language as evidence of a bountiful Creation. If I were pressed to name the one serious disappointment of Bellow's book, it would not be the language, or the portrait of Augie, but rather the portrait of the woman he marries, the dimly conceived Stella, scarcely more real than her namesake in Jacques Offenbach's opera *The Tales of Hoffmann*. Amid so much success, it is a forgivable flaw.

BELLOW TRUMPETED, not without justice, the pleasure he had taken in writing *Augie March*, which spilled out of him in an exhilarating spontaneous gusher: all he had to do, he declared, was to stand there with buckets to catch it. But what happens to America when everyone, following Augie's example, just wants to be himself?

The ascent to pre-eminence in American culture of the superb spontaneous self was hardly Bellow's doing alone. In the 1940's, "third-force" psychologists—that is, neither Freudian nor behaviorist—were preaching the salutary release of hitherto suppressed vital energies, which would swell gloriously if only one lived in accordance with his true self. Carl Rogers, spearhead of the human-potential movement, insisted that previous psychotherapy had been wrong to focus on curing neurosis and promoting tiresome normality; the real task was to "assist the individual to *grow*," in whatever direction gave him the most pleasure. Abraham Maslow plugged the wonders of "self-actualization," of becoming "fully human." A more sober student, the Harvard sociologist David Riesman, distinguished in *The Lonely Crowd* between the other-directed man, who wants what "the crowd" wants, from the inner-directed man, who lives according to his own lights. And then there was Wilhelm Reich, who pronounced the ultimate goal of all human striving to be the orgasm of primordial shattering intensity, which only a paltry few had ever known. While writing *Augie March*, Bellow had sought the benefits of Reichian therapy, and even kept his own orgone accumulator, a box that was large enough for a man to sit in and that gathered life-giving emanations from the erotically juicy atmosphere.

Other serious artists likewise found in the new expressive freedom a means of discovering their brilliant singularity. The poet John Berryman, a friend of Bellow's who praised *Augie March* in the *New York Times Book Review*, went from composing a very proper sonnet cycle in the late 1940's to pouring out *The Dream Songs* in the 1960's, immersed in the bottomless personal sorrow of his alcoholism while devising a variegated diction and many-angled syntax that took in solemn thought, passionate rant, fierce keening, and monkeyshines. Robert Lowell followed a similar track, from the imposing turgidity of the early collections *Lord Weary's Castle* and *The Mills of the Kavanaughs* to the casual, free-flowing frankness about his own manic-depression and marital woes that began with *Life Studies* and *For the Union Dead*. Perhaps the two finest poets of their generation, Berryman and Lowell came to write about their own naked lives in a language distinctively American, and clearly their own.

For still others, though, the new freedom meant license to scrawl and spew. Jackson Pollock spattered paint with the formal mastery of a happy drunk urinating in the snow—which did not stop anyone from hailing him as our foremost painter. Allen Ginsberg cultivated

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a demonstrative homosexuality and a no less demonstrative affinity for drugs; Jack Kerouac boasted that he had written the novel *On the Road* (1957) in three weeks. Pollock, Ginsberg, and Kerouac had their myriad epigoni and worshipers, confirming the judgment of the hipster writer Hunter S. Thompson that when the going gets weird, the weird turn pro; Thompson might have added that they take over the business, and make out like bandits.

Bellow himself came to view the culture he had unwittingly helped to unleash with mounting fear and loathing. Although *Henderson the Rain King* (1959)—the tale of a much-battered Connecticut millionaire who heads off to Africa in quest of primal adventure and wisdom—continues to partake of the spiritual ebullience of *Augie March*, a decade later Bellow had turned grim with disgust. Artur Sammler, the hero of *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), is a Holocaust survivor living in New York who casts a cold eye—his other was blinded by a Nazi rifle butt—upon the current rage for noble savagery: "Millions of civilized people wanted oceanic, boundless, primitive, neckfree nobility, experienced a strange release of galloping impulses, and acquired the peculiar aim of sexual niggerhood for everyone." The cult of noble energy, in which a solid man like Augie could find his spiritual destiny, had been overrun by hellbent barbarian hordes.

It is Artur Sammler himself who is the noble figure in this new world; in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. Sammler's austerity, refinement, sadness, and composure, polar opposites to Augie's ease, eagerness, brio, and affability, are the necessary stays against encroaching chaos and nihilism. This message, in 1970, did not go down well. The reception of *Sammler*, Bellow's second masterpiece, was tepid to hostile—too many in the literary world approved of even if they did not actually participate in the cult of the unencumbered self—and Bellow's stock promptly fell.

He soldiered on, assuming the Samuel Johnson role of defender of civilization. There would be no more exuberant Augies in the Bellow oeuvre. But the loss began to be felt: as his heroes came to resemble more and more nearly Bellow himself, his fiction grew increasingly abstract, as though he had lost interest in life except for the argument he was conducting against the despoilers of civilization.

The despoilers were, and are, real enough. *The Dean's December* (1982) measures the barbarism of Chicago, where thugs from the black underclass run a virtual terror regime beyond the reach of justice, against that of Ceaucescu's Romania, and does not find Chicago wanting. In *More Die of Heartbreak* (1987), the heroic botanist Ben Crader, who sees deeply into the ways of nature, speculates that AIDS might well be condign punishment for the behavior that is its precursor, a literal plague responding to the moral plague of diabolical sexuality.

Not until his most recently published novel, *Ravelstein* (2000), did Bellow relax the severity of his judgment. The narrator, Chick, reveres his friend Abe Ravelstein not only as a brilliant scholar and teacher but as a man in possession of a rare beauty of mind and heart, despite Ravelstein's inability to master his fevered sexuality (he is a ravenous homosexual who has been struck down by AIDS). Ravelstein is altogether Bellow's most complicated moral portrait, a wintry summation of a lifelong effort to capture in fiction everything it means fully to realize your own nature. For a moralist disillusioned with the unforeseen consequences of his most successful early work, this final twist of the screw is a remarkable achievement—and, I think, an enduring one. In the end, Bellow's tender, unquenchable, inconsolable love for the singular being who carves out his destiny, even if it is lightning-scarred and bound to shatter, even if it comes conjoined with lethal moral failure, may be the reason his work will be read and reread long after the imperial selves of our time have been justly forgotten.

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OBSERVATIONS

The Murder Artist

Terry Teachout

THE FACT that Adolf Hitler aspired as a young man to be an artist is sufficiently well known to have passed into the common stock of allusion. ("Hitler—*there* was a painter," quips a character in Mel Brooks's *The Producers*. "He could paint an entire apartment in one afternoon. Two coats!") Similarly, most culturally literate people know of Hitler's interest in the music of Richard Wagner. But, with few exceptions, biographers, historians, and commentators have seldom sought to connect these seemingly unrelated phenomena—to consider, that is, the possibility that Hitler's artistic interests might have been central to his character, or have had a significant effect on his political career.

One such early exception was Thomas Mann, who in his 1938 essay "Brother Hitler" remarked on Hitler's extraordinary ability as a leader of men: "Like it or not, how can we fail to recognize in this phenomenon a sign of artistry?" Similarly, many of Hitler's contemporaries—including some who, like Albert Speer, knew him very well—were struck by the fact that he appeared to have the bohemian temperament of an artist, not a politician. But as a rule, there has been something of a reluctance to explore this peculiar aspect of Hitler's character. To the extent that writers have dealt with it, their accounts have typically been colored by wishful thinking of one kind or another, with some seeking to derogate Hitler's artistic bent in dismissive, Sunday-painter terms, others to inflate his knowledge of the arts far beyond the plausible, and still others to portray him as a monstrous cipher without an inner life. Ian Kershaw, his most recent biographer, states flatly that "outside politics Hitler's life was largely a void."

Now Frederic Spotts, a diplomat turned scholar whose previous books include a history of the Bayreuth festival, has written *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*, a wide-ranging and exceptionally penetrating study of Hitler's relationships with artists and the arts.* Spotts shows that his involvement was—as far as it went—perfectly serious. Though his own abilities as a painter and architect were limited, they were real, just as his love of music was within its own narrow limits both intense and well-informed. More significantly, Spotts contends that Hitler's "aesthetic talents," far from being peripheral to his achievements as a politician, were in fact at the heart of his political self-understanding.

Hitler believed, according to Spotts, that "the ultimate objective of political effort should be artistic achievement." He meant this in a literal sense: "Once he had won his war and established an Aryan state that was a dominant world power, he intended to devote himself to the creation of cultural monuments that would change the face of Germany and immortalize himself." But Hitler was no mere builder of temples celebrating the triumph of his iron will. As Spotts goes on to explain:

> The Hitler of this book is someone for whom culture was not only the end to which power should aspire but also a means of achieving and keeping it. . . . Us-

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ing a new style of politics, mediated through symbols, myths, rites, spectacles, and personal dramatics, he reached the masses as did no other leader of his time.

Not only does *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* serve as a useful corrective to earlier Hitler biographies, it also supplies a thoroughly unsettling account of what, for lovers of the arts, is one of the most unsavory features of the Third Reich: the seeming eagerness of so many noted German artists (as well as more than a few of their counterparts in Nazi-occupied countries, especially France) to collaborate with Hitler and his henchmen. What was it about Hitler that appealed to them? Were they simply afraid not to support him? Or were they responding to the siren call of a deeper urge?

THAT HITLER saw himself as an artist deflected from his natural path by history is incontestable. In his own words, "I became a politician against my will. If someone else had been found, I would never have gone into politics; I would have become an artist or a philosopher."

Though he came from an uncultured family, from childhood onward Hitler was obsessed with the world of art. He saw his first opera, Wagner's *Lohengrin*, at the age of twelve, in the process acquiring a lifelong obsession with its composer. As a budding visual artist, though he was rejected as a student by the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, he was able to eke out a modest living by turning out watercolors for tourists and unsophisticated collectors. As late as 1920, the year he entered politics, he was still describing himself as a "painter" on his application form for the German Workers' party.

Many of the paintings attributed to Hitler are forgeries, but enough authentic examples of his work have been preserved to allow his talents to be fairly gauged. Nearly all are tight, rigid exercises in photographic realism, technically competent but uninspired. In Spotts's words:

> Through his repeated portraiture of well-known Vienna and Munich buildings he developed the near-professional eye of an architect. But he did not begin to find an interpretive technique of his own and, as far as can be judged, neither embellished nor altered what he copied. As a result he rarely gave his scenes life or feeling. . . . Their most marked failing lay in the figures. Those he inserted looked like mannequins and cast a mood of artificiality, not to say crudity, over the whole work.

Only at the very end of his abortive career as a painter did Hitler show any sign of being able to develop further. The warm, deftly balanced colors and looser handling of *Haubordin, the Seminar Church*, an unfinished 1916 watercolor reproduced in *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*, suggest that the stress of wartime may have helped him to overcome his earlier stiffness of execution. No further development, alas, was to take place, for Hitler stopped painting altogether after the war, choosing instead to immerse himself fully in the pursuit of power.

IF HITLER'S artistic gifts were modest, he nonetheless acquired from his hands-on experience an intimate knowledge of the expressive power of art, and it is at least conceivable that, given sufficient encouragement, he might have used that knowledge in innocent ways. He could have become an architectural painter—or, given his passionate interest in Wagner, a stage designer, another discipline in which he briefly dabbled. Instead, he found a way to put his aesthetic bent to more practical and far-reaching use.

As a politician, Hitler had a near-infallible grasp of theatrical technique. In addition to meticulously rehearsing his speeches, he was painstaking about controlling the environments in which he delivered them. Once he came to power, he created unprecedentedly spectacular, large-scale "stage settings" for his performances, frequently designing the key elements himself. "I had spent six years in St. Petersburg before the war in the best days of the old Russian ballet," one onlooker wrote of a Nazi-party rally in Nuremberg, "but in grandiose beauty I have never seen a ballet to compare with it." (A latter-day admirer of Hitler's technique is the rock star David Bowie, who has observed that the German dictator "was no politician, he was a great media artist. . . . He made an entire country a stage show.")

Hitler did more than use aesthetic techniques for propaganda purposes. For him, the whole point of ruling Germany and conquering Europe was to be able to make them over again in a different image—one in which the fine arts would have pride of place. In Spotts's unexaggerated summary:

> He envisaged the construction of stupendous public edifices, opera houses, theaters, and museums. He gave lavish financial support to artists and artistic institutions, commissioned works of music, painting, sculpture, and architecture. . . . The entire Reich was to be given a new cultural shape. Even small towns were to have at least one art gallery and those without a concert hall or opera house were to have visits from traveling orchestras and opera companies.

All of this cultural activity was to be undertaken not merely for its own sake but in order to save the German soul, which Hitler believed to have been corrupted by modern art. To a degree not sufficiently grasped by historians, Hitler's ideology was, indeed, a critique of modernism. Such "international" styles of art as Cubism and Futurism, springing as they did from "a Jewish, foreign mentality," were, he thought, a threat to the emergence of a true German nationalism. As a replacement for this modernist "monstrosity," Hitler proposed a bastard hy-

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bridizing of German romanticism and Greco-Roman neoclassicism.

If "degenerate" art had reduced the Weimar Republic to a state of demoralized anomie, nothing less than a root-and-branch cultural transformation would suffice to undo its effects. Needless to say, this could only be accomplished by brute force—which was one of the main reasons why Hitler held Western democracies in contempt. Shaped by free markets rather than by the single-minded will of an artist-politician, they were fated to sink to the level of the lowest common cultural denominator. As he said in 1938:

> The world will come to Germany and convince itself that Germany has become the guardian of European culture and civilization. When I read of other countries, and particularly of democratic countries, that they are called upon to protect culture, I say, "First build up a little more culture yourselves and then you can protect it."

Hitler, in short, was a deranged idealist, a painter who sought power over others in order to make his romantic dreams real, then grew ever more bloodthirsty when the human beings who were his flesh-and-blood medium resisted his transforming touch. He was not the first such murderous artist. As Irving Babbitt wrote of the similarly mad idealists who had unleashed their own reign of terror on France:

> Robespierre and Saint-Just were ready to eliminate violently whole social strata that seemed to them to be made up of parasites and conspirators, in order that they might adjust this actual France to the Sparta of their dreams; so that the Terror was far more than is commonly realized a bucolic episode. It lends color to the assertion that has been made that the last stage of sentimentalism is homicidal mania.

TO READ *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* is to reflect not only on power but on the various ways in which artists through the ages have responded to power, and more specifically to the politicians and political ideas of their time.

In Nazi Germany, this response, as Frederic Spotts reminds us, was overwhelmingly positive. The list of distinguished non-Jewish artists who left the country after Hitler came to power is brief to the point of invisibility when placed next to the rogues' gallery of those who stayed behind, in many cases not merely accepting the inevitability of Nazi rule but actively collaborating with the regime. The composers Carl Orff and Richard Strauss, the conductors Wilhelm Furtwängler and Herbert von Karajan, the Nobel Prize-winning author Gerhart Hauptmann, the filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, the actor Emil Jannings, the stage designer Caspar Neher—all these and many more were perfectly prepared to make their peace with Nazism.

What drove these men and women? No doubt, in some cases, the motive was the crudest sort of self-interest. For not only did Hitler subsidize the arts, he subsidized individual artists as well, in many cases lavishly. And even those who were not the direct objects of his personal largesse benefited from his open-handed arts policy, which included exemption from military service, as well as from the fact that the emigration and slaughter of prominent Jewish artists left more room at the top of the heap. In addition, many German artists were true Nazi believers; ironically, their number included a few, like the twelve-tone composer Anton Webern and the Expressionist painter Emil Nolde, whose modernist art was anathema to the Nazis. Others, whatever their reservations about specific policies, shared Hitler's loathing for modernism and endorsed his vision of Germany as the savior of the West.

The relationship of these artists to the Nazi regime remains relevant to this day. Though artists vary widely in their political awareness—from total indifference on the one hand to passionate involvement on the other—many, perhaps most, find it hard to resist the blandishments of politicians who appear to take an informed interest, however specious, in the arts. Shelley's famous assertion that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" can also be read as a rueful admission that the world deigns at any given moment to acknowledge only a handful of serious artists. The rest are regarded with comparative indifference, especially in market-based democracies where no natural mechanism exists to introduce the "masses" to high art.

Some artists accept their comparatively lowly status, finding sufficient reward in the practice of their calling. But others are enraged by it, particularly those romantics who long to remake the world so as to bring it into closer accord with their private visions. Such artists are irresistibly drawn to men of power, and are sometimes willing to pervert their art in the name of politics. Hitler, both a romantic and an artist *manqué*, understood this temptation and made the most of it. The historian Paul Johnson understands it as well, and has it in mind when he writes: "Art, no less than politics, carries with it a whiff of sulphur, the stench of the charnel-house."

It is tempting to try to excuse this as mere foolishness. As Hitler himself once remarked, "Artists are simple-hearted souls. Today they sign this, tomorrow that; they don't even look to see what it is, so long as it seems to them well-meaning." But as he knew—better, perhaps, than any other politician of the 20th century—ideas have consequences, and the artist who succumbs to the temptation to dabble in ill-digested political ideas, be he a Nazi, a Communist, or a pacifist, is as morally responsible for their ultimate consequences as any other human being. In the end, beauty excuses nothing, least of all mass murder.

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THE "ROAD MAP"

Will it lead to peace or to devastating war?

The United States, the United Nations, the European Union, and Russia – labeled, collectively, the "Quartet" – have devised a plan called the "Road Map." The Road Map attempts to bring about peace in Israel/Palestine over a three-year period. At the end of that period, the emergence of a Palestinian state is envisioned, a state that is expected to live alongside of Israel in "peace and security."

What are the facts?

Unfriendly promoters. Of the four promoters of the Road Map, only one – the United States – can be considered friendly to and supportive of Israel. In the European Union, the centuries-old virus of anti-Semitism has again reared its ugly head, now disguised as anti-Israelism or anti-Zionism. Russia has always been hostile to Israel and has been an enthusiastic supplier of weapons to the enemies of the Jewish State since its creation. The UN seems to take up most of its time in condemnation of Israel and in discriminating against it, to such an extent that Israel is the only country that is ineligible to become a member of the Security Council.

It is likely, therefore, that the interests of three of the four designers of the Road Map are not in promoting peace, but, hypocritically, rather in the destruction of Israel or at least in its not surviving as a Jewish State.

Palestinian State: a new and unwarranted idea. The idea that the so-called "Palestinians" should have their own state has now been accepted as a just and desirable goal by most of the world. Sad to say, our own president has bought into this concept. One must regretfully assume that he did so mostly in order to appease our "Arab friends," who are outraged about our waging war against Iraq. It buys into the myth that the Israeli-Arab dispute is at the heart of the endemic conflicts in the area and that forcing Israel to "take risks for peace" is a means of assuaging Arab humiliation. But should the safety of Israel, America's only true and reliable ally in that part of the world, be jeopardized or sacrificed on the illusive altar of "Arab friendship?" A Palestinian state did not occur to anybody (even to the "Palestinians" themselves), when the Ottomans were the rulers in the land, when Great Britain had the Palestine Mandate, or when Jordan was in occupation of the "West Bank" for nineteen years after Israel's War of Independence in 1948. The concept of a Palestinian state did not arise until after the Six-Day War of 1967, in which Israel was victorious, wrested the "West Bank" from Jordan, the Gaza Strip from Egypt, and has been in administration of those territories since.

> "The solution: Total autonomy for Israel's Arab minority, within Israel, the Jewish State – a reward to which so many minorities in the world have aspired, but which has been granted to only a very few."

Israel is a tiny country, a sliver on the Mediterranean coast. It is even now in a strategically almost impossible position. Without the "depth" of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and without full control of the Jordan Valley it would be utterly indefensible. Israeli generals know that and American generals know that. And, of course, Arab generals know that also. But Israel needs to be able to defend itself, because all of its immediate neighbors – Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon – no matter what they may be saying for public consumption, have only one primary military and foreign policy objective and that is to destroy Israel, to drive the hated Jews into the sea, and to finish what they call the "Zionist Enterprise" once and for all. To believe that the "Palestinians," once they had their own state, would be peaceful neighbors of a truncated and mortally vulnerable Israel or that the other Arabs states and Iran would turn from wolves to lambs is to either engage in wishful thinking or quite deliberately be co-conspirators in the eventual destruction of the Jewish State.

The Road Map will inevitably go the way that other previous "peace plans" have gone – all of which demanded "sacrifices for peace" from Israel, yielding large chunks of territory for only empty words from the Arabs. But even if Israel, tired from decades of bloodletting and under unbearable pressure from the "international community," would acquiesce to such a suicidal path, the "Palestinians" would not allow it to happen. Their hatred of the Jews and the inculcation of their children to die as martyrs are such that they would be unable and unwilling to stop the terror that they have visited upon the Holy Land. Another bloody war, rather than peace, is the likely outcome of the Road Map. What is the "solution" that so far has eluded everybody? It is what Israel has always been willing to grant: total autonomy for its Arab minority within Israel, the Jewish State. It is a reward to which so many minorities in the world have aspired, but which has been granted to only a very few.

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Books in Review

Kith and Kin

In Praise of Nepotism:
A Natural History
by Adam Bellow
Doubleday. 565 pp. $30.00

Reviewed by
Nathan Glazer

THIS IS a book whose provenance may well overshadow any serious discussion of its merits. Adam Bellow is a well-known editor, and he is also the son of Saul Bellow—as he notes here in an astonishingly lengthy list of current writers who are the sons or daughters of better-known writers. As an editor, he is of course very well connected; the list of those he acknowledges as offering some kind of help with this book is so extensive that one begins to wonder who in the literary world is *un*connected with him.

But the point of his book is a serious one. We are a society committed to the idea that an individual should make it on his own merits, without connections and without pull. Civil-service laws should determine who gets jobs in government; academic achievement who is admitted to colleges, universities, and professional schools; competence who gets jobs in business and industry; true professional or artistic achievement who is published and who wins appointments, prizes, recognition. And yet we cannot escape the vast reach of connections and kin in determining our individual opportunities and our fate.

The obvious response to this, if we are to be true to the dominant values of our liberal and democratic society, is to be even stricter in emphasizing merit and competence over kin and connections: to extend civil-service examinations to more and higher government posts, to insist on academic achievement alone as the criterion for admission to colleges and universities and professional schools, perhaps even to require that books be submitted anonymously to publishing houses and prize committees.

In fact, however, our tendency has been to move in the other direction: to accept, even if we do not publicly acknowledge, the role of kin and connections in getting the good things of life. And so we have removed more and more positions in government from civil-service regulations, found even more reasons why merit alone should not be the basis of admission to academic institutions, taken it increasingly for granted that we should use what resources we have to advance our children and relations in the world. Our laws do not accept and our dominant social philosophy declines to recognize the claims of particular connection, but what this large volume documents, in mind-numbing detail, is that in practice we operate in a directly opposite fashion.

It is, admittedly, a dilemma. The most influential work of moral philosophy of the past half-century is John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, a book that demands and rationalizes the fullest possible degree of equality and fairness for every individual independent of any accidental property of birth or station. Not only among liberals but even among conservatives, one would be hard-

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pressed to find a defense of disparate or unequal treatment—except, as in the case of affirmative action, one that has been designed to achieve an even larger measure of equality. And yet ordinary life stands in stark contradiction to these principles. Who of us with children or grandchildren or relatives or friends can deny using what influence we have for their advantage? Can we hope to reconcile our values and our practices, or are we simply all hypocrites?

ADAM BELLOW thinks we can achieve some kind of reconciliation. His case rests less on reasoned argument than on biology, history, and experience. We are, he writes, what we are—which is, in part, animals. Our animal nature, as the recent revival of sociobiology argues, reaches into and explains many aspects of our behavior, and forcibly commands that we advance the well-being of those closest to us by genetic connection. It is not possible to escape our nature. It exercises an authority that quite transcends the principles of universal equality and blind justice that we have developed in the course of human history, and that we have publicly come to acknowledge as our guides.

So Bellow begins his long tour with biology, going back as far as the slime mold. Then he takes us through human history, from clan, caste, and tribe, from the Hebrew Bible and the classical world, to the Middle Ages and finally to modern times. Along the way, we meet the most notorious cases of nepotistic preference: the Borgias, the Bonapartes, the Rothschilds. In all this, readers may find more than they wish to know, and specialists much at which to cavil. But the book really takes off when Bellow reaches the American colonies and the American revolution—for it is then that the ordinary and universal practice of nepotism came under direct challenge both in theory and, indeed, in practice.

As if there were not enough already to admire in the American founders—Washington, the Adamses, Jefferson—Bellow takes us through their arduous internal struggles between, on the one hand, affection and preference for those close to them and, on the other, adherence to the principles of the new nation and its founding documents. It is an instructive and even inspiring exercise.

George Washington had no children, but he had nephews. As President, his behavior was perhaps faultless: "So far as I know my own heart, I would not be in the remotest degree influenced, in making nominations, by motives arising from the ties of amity and blood." Here is what he wrote to one of his nephews, Bushrod Washington:

> You may not doubt my wishes to see you appointed to any office of honor or emolument in the new government, but however deserving you may be of the one you have suggested . . . the eyes of Argus are upon me, and no slip will pass unnoticed that can be improved into a supposed partiality for friends or relatives.

Retired to Mount Vernon after two terms as President, Washington may have unbent a little, writing to John Adams's secretary of war about another nephew, George Washington Custis:

> If ample fortune, good Education, more than common abilities, and good disposition, free from Vice of any kind, give him a title . . . , his pretensions thereto (though not to the injury of another) are good. But it is not my desire to ask this as a favor. I never have, and never shall, solicit any thing for myself or connections.

Bellow characterizes this last disclaimer as "disingenuous," adding that "the father of his country had made his wishes clear, and they were unhesitatingly obeyed." But I think Bellow is being too censorious. Later he quotes Jefferson, writing about a similarly sticky situation—in this case, a kinsman who had relieved Jefferson by not pursuing an appointment: "It is true this places the [relatives] of the President in a worse situation than if he were a stranger, but the public good . . . requires this sacrifice." Here a friend of the President was being *penalized* because of his connection. The problem was a painful and delicate one, and it deserves a more extended discussion than Bellow gives it.

A final exchange, this one between Adams and Washington, is perhaps the most interesting. Pondering what to do about his son John Quincy Adams, who was no neophyte but had already accumulated an impressive record in the foreign service and was eligible for a major appointment as ambassador, the new President asked Washington for advice. Here was the response:

> If my wishes would be of any avail they should go to you in a strong hope that you will not withhold merited promotion from Mr. John [Quincy] Adams because he is your son. For without intending to compliment the father or mother or censure any others, I give it as my decided opinion that Mr. Adams is the most valuable public character we have—and that he will prove to be the ablest of all our Diplomatic Corps.

President Adams appointed his son ambassador to Prussia, and Washington's judgment of his character and abilities was certainly vindicated.

THE FOUNDING fathers struggled with the issue; their recent successors seem unbothered by it. When FDR appointed his son Jimmy as his private secretary at a good salary, Eleanor objected, but Franklin rejoined: "Why should I be deprived of my son's help and the pleasure of having him with me just because I am the President?"

Since Roosevelt, we have fallen

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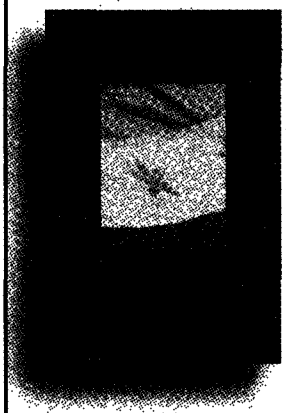

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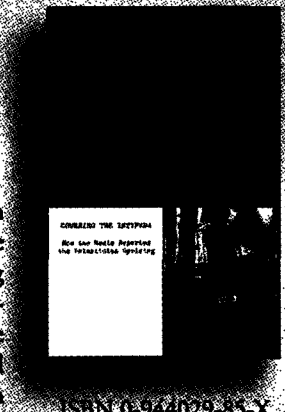

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much farther. Bellow reviews with considerable distaste the case of the Kennedys, climaxed by the appointment of Robert F. Kennedy as his brother's Attorney General. Indeed, it may have been in part because of that appointment that a federal nepotism statute was passed in 1967. This law, Bellow observes, was in turn "the main reason why Hillary Rodham Clinton could not be named to a cabinet position in her husband's administration."

I am not sure this is correct. We learn from a footnote in this book that "the law does not prohibit the employment of relatives or spouses in the same federal agency; rather, it prevents officials from influencing decisions affecting the employment of such relatives." Would this not have been considered relevant to the hypothetical case of a President appointing his wife to a cabinet position? Here, too, deeper discussion would have been welcome.

In any case, the 1967 statute was not the first of its kind. The earliest attempt in law to limit nepotism was occasioned by the scandal of Congressmen placing their relatives on the payroll, sometimes in no-show jobs. Congressmen J.R. Mitchell introduced a bill in 1932 outlawing such appointments; it passed, but was repealed five years later. Today the practice continues, and no one seems much exercised by it.

I wish Bellow had been able to offer some comparison of the practices of the Kennedys with those of the Bushes, though it is true that the latter's story is not yet finished. He does display an unfortunate prejudice when he writes of George W. Bush and Al Gore, two presidential candidates who in different measure had been helped in their careers by being the sons of successful politicians, that "the superficial frat boy was marginally preferred [by the electorate] to the humorless, brownnosing wonk." In fact, the frat boy ran 500,000 votes behind the wonk.

IN THE postwar period, corporations as well as colleges and universities introduced anti-nepotism policies of their own, but they ran afoul of the women's movement. This was a case in which the search for "equality" by one definition turned out to limit "equality" by another: in the 1960's, a competent academic wife was disallowed from receiving an appointment in the same department as her husband (or vice-versa). In the wake of the expansion of women's rights, all such rules have fallen by the way.

So what is to be done? As I have intimated, Bellow is no enemy of our present degree of kin preference. Distinguishing it from the old-fashioned sort, he calls it "modern nepotism"; in this, the initial advantage bestowed by connection is moderated by a subsequent need to show competence. He finds this quite acceptable, but once more his discussion of the issues it raises is limited and leaves much unsaid. I am sure a host of moral and social philosophers will have more to offer. Bellow deserves credit for having placed the question on the table, and I hope it will not be held against him that he has a personal interest in the matter.

Assimilation Blues

Mexifornia:
A State of Becoming
by Victor Davis Hanson
Encounter. 150 pp. $21.95

Reviewed by
James Q. Wilson

IMMIGRATION IS changing the nation, and nowhere more rapidly than in California. My state is home to about 40 percent of all immigrants, half of whom are from Mexico. Or at least half of the legal ones are from Mexico: since we have no idea how many illegal immigrants have also arrived, the best we can say is that about ten million Mexicans live in California. Even that number involves a lot of guesswork; many people born in Mexico do not list themselves as such on census returns, and many children of Mexican parents intermarry with people born here. Altogether, it is likely that by 2050, one-half of the population of California will be Mexican; in Los Angeles, something like half already are.

But what does it mean to say that immigration is changing the nation? As Victor Davis Hanson is well aware, we have had waves of immigration—from England, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Asia, and Eastern Europe, to say nothing of the coerced immigration of black slaves from Africa. Nevertheless, the newest wave, Hanson suggests in *Mexifornia*, is quite different.

Unlike previous immigrations, Hispanic and especially Mexican immigration is a continuous, never-ending process. Mexicans pour across our 2,000-mile-long southern border not simply because it is very difficult to guard but also because life in Mexico has been miserable for the great majority of people for many generations and is likely to remain so for generations to come. Whereas we had a burst of English immigration due to political and religious motives, Irish and German immigration for (relatively) short-lived economic reasons, Jewish immigration on account of economic and religious oppression alike, we now have Mexican immigration because, for the better part of a century, conditions for Mexicans in Mexico have been very poor.

Hanson's book is an effort not only to state these facts baldly but to argue that the future of California, and by implication of the country as a whole, is in the hands of

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JAMES Q. WILSON, *a veteran contributor, is the author most recently of* The Marriage Problem: How Our Culture Has Weakened Families.

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Americans who are not making the right decisions. The right decision, he says, would be to maintain our traditional commitment to assimilation. For two centuries, we turned immigrants into Americans; whatever their family heritage or religious orientation, they became people who spoke English, recited the Pledge of Allegiance, worked hard in school, learned American history, accepted American culture, and joined the American workforce.

But no longer. Instead, according to Hanson, we have experimented with all sorts of unworkable strategies—bilingual education, revisionist history, affirmative action, generous welfare programs—many of which are aimed not at assimilation but at encouraging a multicultural or separatist identity. In California, this anti-assimilationist position has been propagated by academics who teach courses in the field of "Chicano studies" and by ethnic separatists who defend "La Raza," arguing that California is a racist state, stolen from Mexico. The result, Hanson charges, has been to make progress less, not more, likely for young Mexicans; they are being victimized by a culture that praises the misery they have escaped and criticizes the opportunities America offers.

The strength of this book lies in the unique perspective Hanson brings to his material. To most readers of this magazine he is surely known primarily as a military historian with a passionate interest in the success of our war against terrorism. But he also happens to be a professor of classics at a campus of California State University and, along with his family, to manage a raisin farm in Selma, an agricultural town in the Central Valley where Mexicans are a majority. Hanson has lived his whole life with Mexicans: youngsters with whom he went to school, workers his farm has employed, undergraduates to whom he has taught Latin, his own Mexican-American nephews, nieces, and sisters-in-law. He admires his Mexican relatives and friends, despairs over crime and disease in the Mexican community, is encouraged by his Mexican students, and worries about Mexicans who take courses in identity politics instead of in real subjects.

Unfortunately, much as I admire Hanson as a skilled writer and an active participant, and much as I am sympathetic to a great deal of what he has to say, this volume is less a book than an expanded magazine article (which is how it originated). It has no footnotes, no references, no index, and almost no discussion of the substantial literature that already exists on the patterns, economics, and demographics of Mexican immigration. You will certainly learn from it that elite thinking about im-

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migration is muddled, misguided, and possibly harmful. But if you want to learn more about what facilitates and what prevents upward social mobility for Mexican immigrants, you will have to look elsewhere.

Hanson does show what some Mexicans have achieved in this country and what many others have failed to achieve, and he has a balanced view of both progress and retrogression, making his argument rest carefully—if precariously—on his own experience. But he does not explain why some immigrants become assimilated and others do not, nor does he measure whether social mobility has gone up or down in the last half-century and, if it has gone down (as I suspect it has), why.

Similarly, when he derides, I think correctly, the more radical enthusiasts of identity politics, Hanson makes no mention of the fact that, by sizable popular majorities, California has approved new laws discouraging bilingual education and banning racial and ethnic preferences. He does not say much about how the state's new commitment to learning English has helped thousands of immigrant students or explain why, if our universities cannot be trusted, the voters can be. On the question of a common culture, he acknowledges that on the popular level the American media do rapidly draw almost everyone into a shared national experience regardless of particular background, but then he leaves us worrying that, somehow, Mexicans will lose out.

The central issue raised by *Mexifornia* is whether Mexican-Americans should be viewed as an ethnic group aspiring for assimilation or a racial group maintaining a separate identity. On this subject, no better book exists than Peter Skerry's *Mexican-Americans: The Ambivalent Minority* (1993). On the basis of detailed empirical study, Skerry demonstrates how most Mexican-Americans have struggled with the demands of daily life even as their elites have tried to define them as a racial group for whom separate identity is more important than material progress. I wish Hanson had taken up Skerry's argument, showing whether and how it works itself out in his classroom and among his neighbors.

Then there is the complicated question of upward mobility. At one time, scholars held that recent immigrants were like older ones, talented and energetic people who soon cashed in on the opportunities of life in America. But that has changed. The economist George Borjas of Harvard has produced evidence suggesting that the continuing flood of Mexican immigrants has depressed the wages of native-born blue-collar workers while also preventing the immigrants themselves from catching up. As recently as 1970, Borjas contends, immigrant workers earned about as much as native workers, but by 1998 immigrant income had fallen to only three-fourths of native income.

Moreover, as Christopher Jencks has pointed out, this relative decline in immigrant income has occurred even though American employers *like* Mexican workers—they may not speak much English, but they work harder and more dependably than native workers in the same jobs. The bottom line is that the economic gap between immigrants and native workers is wider today than it was a century ago. One grim measure of this, according to Jencks, is that California now has the lowest rate of home ownership in the nation.

The way immigrants are treated by others is not the whole story. Cultural factors are at work as well. Although the strong familial ties of Mexican immigrants serve to keep down the rate of illegitimate births, they also reduce the freedom given to children, especially girls, to make progress on their own. The lure of nearby Mexico contributes in another way to retarding assimilation: only a little over one-fifth of Mexican immigrants become American citizens, as compared with half of all Asians.

FINALLY, ON the issue of ethnic identity, there does seem little doubt that politicized universities can make matters worse. Skerry reminds us of the "Diversity Project" at the University of California at Berkeley, which studied how undergraduates experience "ethnic and racial diversity on campus." What it found was "racialization," a process through which human connections once defined in personal terms are transformed into racial ones. You may graduate from high school as a young American, but college teaches you to be a Chicano instead.

Hanson writes movingly about the legions of Mexican immigrants who grow up under the idea that "so-called Chicanos can find parity with whites only through government coercion, income redistribution, and racial chauvinism, rather than by the very hard work of traditional education that once ensured that Mexican kids knew as much about math and science as members of any other ethnic group." This change leaves young Mexicans in "a destructive in-betweenness, often the pawns of those who play the parlor game of identity politics."

This is not just a problem for liberals. Many conservatives routinely condemn any effort at maintaining a separate culture, forgetting, I think, the lesson of Oscar Handlin's *The Uprooted* (1951): namely, that almost every immigrant develops an ethnic identity just by being here and by living among both fellow immigrants and American strangers. Nor is identity politics always wrong; rather, as Skerry points out, it is wrong when the commitment to one's racial or ethnic identity dominates every other perspective one brings to bear on the world, especially concerning such matters as progress, income, family, opportunity, and sociability. As for university professors who agitate in their courses for returning California to Mexican control—Hanson

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seems to have run into a lot of them—it would be interesting to figure out just how important such courses are in the lives of the students who take them.

Addressing what should be done about all of this, Hanson proposes that the nation "adopt sweeping restrictions on immigration and put an end to separatist ideology along with the two-tier legal system for illegal aliens." How exactly we are to enforce such "sweeping restrictions" is a tough question. No less hard is how we are to "put an end" to the postmodernist commitment to extreme forms of identity politics. And still another puzzle is whether the imported familial culture of poor, rural Mexicans can be expected to adapt to America as rapidly as the urban culture of Asians and Europeans. It would have been helpful if Hanson had developed these ideas; perhaps in his next book?

In the Camps

Gulag: A History
by Anne Applebaum
Doubleday. 679 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Steven G. Marks

Returning from a trip to the Soviet Union in 1934, P. L. Travers, the creator of Mary Poppins, wrote caustically that she had been "diddled": "the tourist is shown only the best of everything." Unlike Travers, most writers and intellectuals who visited the Soviet Union at the time were quite easily taken in. Among them was the Nobel Prize-winning French writer Romain Rolland, who brushed off reports of brutality in Soviet concentration camps with the comment that "There are almost identical things going on in the prisons of Poland; you have them in the prisons of California . . . ; you have them in the English dungeons of the Andaman Islands." Even today, although no one denies the existence, or the horrors, of the Gulag—the vast system of Soviet prison camps—some scholars still downplay the central role it played in Soviet history.

Anne Applebaum, a columnist for the *Washington Post* and a frequent commentator on events in the former Soviet Union, has little tolerance for this point of view: for her, the Gulag was *the* defining feature of the Soviet system. From its beginnings as a means of incarcerating opponents of the Bolshevik regime, it soon grew into a vast net-

Steven G. Marks, *a new contributor, teaches history at Clemson University and is the author of* How Russia Shaped the Modern World *(Princeton).*

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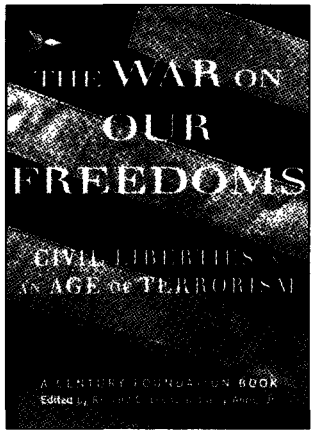

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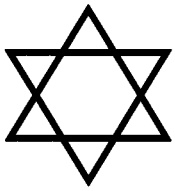
work of slave labor whose ulterior rationale was to develop the remoter parts of the Russian semi-continent. Indeed, Applebaum sees the Gulag as the linchpin of the Soviet economy during Stalin's successive Five Year Plans, when slave laborers were found at worksites in every part of the USSR.

By the early 1950's, the Gulag was consuming more than 16 percent of the state's entire budget and 10 percent of total capital investment. Slave prisoners mined coal, gold, nickel, and, eventually, uranium. They processed oil and gas. They made everything from toys to airplanes. They built roads and canals. They erected entire cities, like Magadan and Norilsk, on the tundra. Most commonly in this heavily forested country, they cut trees and processed lumber for industry, laboring twelve-hour days in mosquito-infested swamps or at temperatures of 40 below.

More often than not, the prisoners worked with nothing more than crude hand tools. They lacked adequate clothing, food, or health care. They died by the thousands. Yet, around the world, supporters of the Soviet regime and, later, its third-world imitators trumpeted the economy based on this forced labor as a revolutionary advance over capitalism and a marvel of productivity.

IN REALITY, Applebaum shows, the Gulag was the quintessential expression of a one-party police state and the arbitrary, often sadistic, rule of its leaders. It was Lenin who created the secret police, introduced terror as a routine political tool, ordered the mass arrest of actual and potential opponents, and endorsed the notion of people as cogs in the machinery of the Communist state. It was Stalin who, far from being remote from the process as claimed by apologists then and later, bore direct responsibility for maintaining and expanding the use of prisoners as slave laborers. Applebaum adduces a number of factors to explain why the Soviet dictator took such a "deep personal interest in the camps": his yearning for prestige, to be achieved through the rapid economic transformation of the country; his admiration of Czar Peter the Great, many of whose grand accomplishments depended on the expansion of serfdom; his megalomaniacal enjoyment of the spectacle of multitudes of people doing his bidding; the cruel pleasure he took in watching his enemies suffer.

As her treatment of Stalin suggests, Applebaum hardly shies away from the most difficult and contentious issues concerning the Gulag. Another such issue is the number of victims who disappeared into the vast Gulag "archipelago" (to use the term coined by the great Russian writer, and former inmate, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn). Over the decades, estimates of those arrested ranged



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from a low in the mere thousands—as proposed by some pro-Soviet researchers—to the millions asserted by so-called "cold warriors." Making use of the still not fully accessible police archives, Applebaum sorts through the different categories of prisoners, resolves internal contradictions, acknowledges gaps, and offers her own "fair guesses." These come closer to the higher estimates arrived at by Solzhenitsyn and by "cold-war" historians like Robert Conquest.

Applebaum puts the total number of forced laborers in the USSR before 1953 (the year of Stalin's death) at 28.7 million. Excluded from the total are roughly 800,000 people who were executed shortly after arrest and the many thousands of others who were imprisoned or exiled or murdered outside the Gulag's direct jurisdiction. No statistics, she notes, can take into account the untold numbers of the elderly or the very young who died prematurely because of the disappearance of their children or parents; the lifelong sufferings of those ostracized because of the arrest of a relative; the tragic break-up of families; or the myriad other social and psychological costs imposed by Soviet state terror.

Still another vexed subject is the relation of the Soviet slave-labor system to the Nazi concentration camps. As Applebaum points out, there were many critical differences between them. Although the practical result (and often the goal) of Stalin's assault on certain ethnic groups—Chechens, Jews, Ukrainians, and others—was to undermine their autonomy and cultures, the purpose was not genocidal murder. Certainly no single minority was scheduled for annihilation as were the Jews in the Third Reich. In contrast to Germany, moreover, where the targets of repression were clearly identified, the enemy in Russia was much less precisely defined: people who were members of the ruling elite on one day could find themselves prisoners on the next. Applebaum documents many instances of jailers (and their higher-ups) ending up as inmates—and vice-versa.

Although fatalities were common in the Gulag, there were no camps like Auschwitz whose primary purpose was human slaughter. Mass executions did take place, but there were also random releases of prisoners. And while many camp commandants readily neglected or tormented their prisoners, a few strove to improve conditions.

But Applebaum does not make the mistake of overemphasizing these differences, in the manner of historians sympathetic to the Soviet cause who have refused to acknowledge similarities between Communist and Nazi dictatorships. Although she neglects to point out that the Gulag impressed, and to

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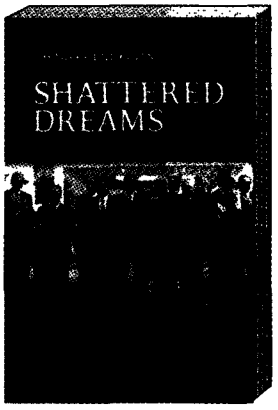

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some degree inspired, Heinrich Himmler, she does observe that, "at a very deep level," Nazi and Soviet concentration camps were "related." Both were manifestations of the desire to persecute, dehumanize, and liquidate entire categories of people defined as enemies of the state. In both Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany, "people were arrested not for what they had done, but for who they were." And the essence of both regimes, an essence reflected in their concentration camps, was a barbaric inhumanity that brought unimaginable suffering to millions of individuals.

THE HEART of *Gulag* is a moving chronicle of the collective experiences of these millions of individuals—male and female, adult and child, Russian and non-Russian. Applebaum follows them as they underwent arrest, interrogation, and transport to the camps, and continues her harrowing narrative with chapters on work, life, and death after arrival. At some levels this part of the story is familiar from memoirs that have been available for years, but Applebaum adds new material from a host of archives and numerous interviews with former inmates, their family members, and former guards.

In so doing, she is able to provide the most thorough and subtle treatment of the subject to date. She also breaks new ground with information on the inmate uprisings that rocked the postwar Gulag, on the demise of the slave economy under Khrushchev, and on the political prisons of the final decades of the Soviet Union—which, although a far cry from those of earlier years, retained enough similar features to crush a new generation of dissidents. For these reasons alone, her book is not likely to be surpassed any time soon.

In a final chapter, on memory, Applebaum criticizes today's Russians for their unwillingness to confront or even take an interest in the Gulag. "The past," she writes, "does not haunt Russia's secret police, Russia's judges, Russia's politicians, or Russia's business elite." But how, she rightly asks, will the rule of law and a decent civil society develop if there is no awareness of the pitfalls of excessive state power and no concern for the victims of the Soviet past?

Just as appropriately, Applebaum pleads that the rest of the world pay greater attention to the history of the Gulag. This barbaric apparatus was, as she shows, the model adopted by Communist dictators everywhere and still functioning in today's China and North Korea; she might have added that it provided a blueprint for the secret-police states of both Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Hafez al-Assad in Syria. No one can comprehend 20th-century history or truly appreciate the imperiled condition of a good portion of humanity in our own time without an understanding of the Gulag. Establishing that point is perhaps the major contribution of Anne Applebaum's book.

What Do Jews Need?

The Rebbe's Army:
Inside the World of
Chabad-Lubavitch
by Sue Fishkoff

Schocken. 352 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
David Gelernter

SUE FISHKOFF'S book shows us a religious movement in action—one of the most startlingly successful of modern times. The movement is the mission of Chabad (or "Lubavitcher") Hasidism to the

DAVID GELERNTER *is a professor of computer science at Yale. His five-part series in* COMMENTARY, *"Judaism Beyond Words," concluded in the July-August issue.*

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Jews. Fishkoff is no scholar, historian, or theologian, no kind of "expert." But she is a fine reporter and a warm and winning writer, and her book has so much forward momentum, the reader finds himself asking and answering the big questions for himself.

Chabad is one part of Hasidism, which is one part of Orthodox Jewry. Orthodox communities are traditionally the Greta Garbos of Judaism: we'll leave you alone, you leave us alone. Ask them to explain the 3,000-year spiritual history of the foundational religion of the Western world and their answer boils down to "Go away." It is true that, in Israel, some Orthodox Jews have worked for decades to compel the government to enforce their worldview on the ignorant public; but they rarely waste any *sympathy* on the public.

Chabad's late leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson—the seventh and (so far) last Lubavitcher Rebbe—had a different idea. Instead of keeping his Hasidim at home in their self-contained Brooklyn community, he sent them into the world to coax unconnected and barely connected Jews a step closer to normative, Orthodox, "Torah" Judaism. It was a startling idea, in several ways; but he was a startling man.

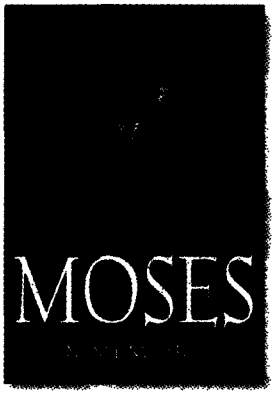
VIRTUALLY EVERYONE who ever met Rabbi Schneerson agrees that he was a figure of electrifying presence; of uncanny penetration and spiritual depth. Nearly ten years after his death in 1994, his followers are still unwilling or unable to appoint a successor, and are still carrying out his instructions. Some go further and have created a scandal in the Orthodox community by calling the late Rebbe "messiah"—the anointed one who will arrive one day to save mankind.

Unlike virtually every other religious mission in history, the Rebbe's mission to the Jews did not (and does not) seek converts from other religions. Nor did it aspire to make Orthodox Jews out of "unaffiliated" ones. It aimed to redecorate Jewish lives room by room instead of tearing them down and building new ones.

At the start, in the 1970's, the mission was painfully unsophisticated. Chabad *shlichim* (emissaries) would stop Jews on the street, urging women to accept Sabbath candles and men to put on tefillin (small leather boxes with biblical verses inside, worn on the arm and forehead during morning prayers). Nowadays things are different. Roadwork is still part of Chabad's program, but a small part. Today, an amazingly large proportion of Chabad newlyweds and young families depart native ground in Brooklyn for points all over the world. Sometimes they join other existing Chabad communities, but often they establish new ones, including in parts of the world where scarcely any Jews (much less Orthodox ones) exist. Between a third and a half of the community, according to Fishkoff, lives outside hasidic enclaves.

Chabad emissaries go to Florida and Israel—but also to Alaska and Shanghai. And they go to settle, for the rest of their lives. By creating synagogues and all sorts of Jewish schools and summer camps and adult-education programs, by offering free classes and free guidance (on bar mitzvahs, weddings, funerals, and everything in between), by rehabilitating drug addicts and helping the down-and-out of all religions and races, Chabad has changed Jewish and non-Jewish lives around the world.

A leading Lubavitch official explains the Chabad approach: "The Rebbe said, 'Do what you can to bring *moshiach*,'" the messiah. "So you do more and more. A girl's school in the morning. A drug facility. Poor people." Fishkoff's reporting makes clear that these are no idle boasts. Inspired by the transcendent spiritual power of their late leader, so revved-up on God and Torah that they practically glow in the dark, Chabad emissaries de-



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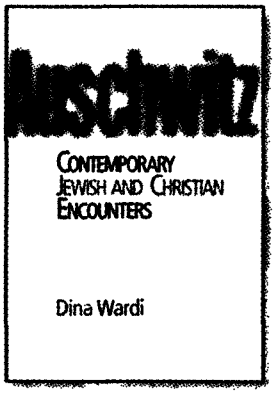

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vote their lives to their fellow Jews and fellow human beings.

IF IT all sounds too good to be true, Chabad does have problems of its own. These Fishkoff explains candidly but sympathetically. A substantial part of the Jewish community is hostile to Chabad's enterprise—often out of ignorance or prejudice, but sometimes for deeper reasons. Many Jews believe that Chabad's goals are "to get their hooks into people" and then drag, brainwash, or pied-piper them into the hasidic world. (Fishkoff convincingly refutes this idea.) Others find Chabad embarrassing—too blatantly Jewish.

But there is also the fact that some Chabad Hasidim believe that the late Rebbe will return as the messiah. It is hard to overstate the horror that this quasi-Christian idea arouses in most Jewish minds. The idea that the Rebbe will return from death (or is not actually dead) is anathema to Judaism, and pure poison to Chabad's mission.

Fishkoff undertakes to assess the penetration of the messianist heresy within Chabad. "Nut cases," one Chabadnik calls the messianists in his movement. Among the emissaries, she concludes, an "overwhelming majority" want nothing to do with this belief, and she reports that by 1999, the "breakaway convention" of *shlichim* who called the late Rebbe messiah "was drawing only 70 participants, compared to 1,500 at the official convention."

Others who have studied the phenomenon claim that the messianists, to the contrary, are a major (if largely subterranean) element in Chabad. They point to the large number of Chabad leaders who are known to hold messianic views about the Rebbe in private, and to the leadership's reluctance to suppress (not merely denounce) the messianist heresy.

WHO IS right? No outsider can know the true state of Chabad's mind. But in the meantime Chabad's actions enlicit unequivocal gratitude from those they benefit. In the voices Fishkoff has marshaled, you can hear how badly the Jewish world needs Chabad. One self-described liberal Jew identifies Chabad as the force that "doesn't get distracted, it doesn't get lost"; it is the "real foundation of Judaism."

Fishkoff's book practically compels the conclusion that, in the not-too-distant future, nearly all American rabbis and synagogues will be some flavor of Orthodox. With all due respect to the many brilliant and devoted Jewish leaders in the non-Orthodox world, liberal Judaism is dying. It cannot sustain itself. Its children are leaving.

Fishkoff cites a question posed by a Reform leader: why can't his movement, "whose spiritual message is more appropriate to contemporary American life, muster up the same enthusiasm" that Chabad arouses? It is a touching and sad question that answers itself. Evidently many Jews don't want a message that is "appropriate," they want one that is true. And they want a direct connection to their traditions. Human beings need food and water; also legitimacy. The ice-your-own-cupcake world of liberal Judaism has been weighed and found wanting.

Chabad is hardly the whole of Orthodoxy, although you might not learn this from reading Fishkoff. The mesmerizing brilliance of 20th-century rabbinic culture was mainly *not* hasidic. Modern Orthodoxy, "black-hat" Orthodoxy, and "neo-orthodoxy" are all parts of a developing picture. But Chabad has a crucial lesson for them all when it comes to approaching their fellow Jews: a lesson in nobility and kindness.

"You're as Jewish as I am"—the words with which one Chabad emissary approaches the unaffiliated. "This," he explains to Fishkoff, "is what the Jewish soul wants to hear." Chabad's role resembles the role Conservative Judaism (the "middle way" between Reform and Orthodoxy) once played in American Jewish life. People used to mock Conservatism: "Orthodox rabbis with Reform congregations." Partly in response, Conservatism was transformed almost beyond recognition. But it turns out that the Orthodox rabbi with his Reform congregation made sense after all—just as it made sense in ancient Israel for a minority to be priests and tend the Temple and for the large majority to support them, to drop by occasionally, and to be as good and as holy as they had it in them to be.

There are minor errors in Fishkoff's book. More important are the major truths. If someone had announced in the 1960's that what Judaism needed was thousands of utterly devoted young Orthodox missionaries to go anywhere, live austerely, and welcome every Jew with open arms, the response would have been: "Forget it, you're crazy; you're asking for miracles." Fishkoff's book makes plain that a miracle is exactly what the Rebbe asked for, and a miracle is what he got.

The Book Club

Reading Lolita in Tehran:
A Memoir in Books
by Azar Nafisi
Random House. 368 pp. $23.95

Reviewed by
Sam Munson

THIS IS a very timely book. Azar Nafisi, now teaching at Johns Hopkins, recounts here the almost two decades she spent as a professor of Western literature in the Iran of Ayatollah Khomeini. In light of recent events in the Middle East and here at home, Nafisi's decision to tell her story offers a rare oppor-

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SAM MUNSON *reviewed* McSweeney's Mammoth Treasury of Thrilling Tales *in our June issue.*

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tunity for Westerners to get a glimpse from the inside of the mundane workings of a society smashed to bits and then reconstituted by a radical, barbaric tyranny. One turns to her book with high hopes. Unfortunately it does not fulfill them.

Reading Lolita opens in 1995, when Nafisi, still in Iran, decides to form a weekly discussion group with seven of her most prized students. For the rest of the book, which is divided into four sections, she interweaves an account of the group itself with the story of her own life and career. Born into one of Tehran's leading families—her father was the mayor of the city under the Shah—she followed the familiar path of children of privilege everywhere: secular upbringing, private education (in her case in Europe), and, in adolescence, the requisite flirtation with radical politics. The only unusual feature may have been her marriage at eighteen, an entanglement that was over by the time (in the late 1960's) she was sent to college and graduate school in the U.S. There, too, she marched with the Left and in the name of its various causes, going so far as to write a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Oklahoma on the 1930's "proletarian" (read: Communist) novelist Mike Gold.

While in graduate school, Nafisi married again, and in 1978 she and her husband, a fellow Iranian, returned home, where she began teaching literature at the University of Tehran. Although Khomeini had not yet taken over, the rapidly increasing influence of the fundamentalist parties already made for a difficult situation. Her classes were riddled with young and enthusiastic religious radicals who disrupted university life and forced the cancellation of classes. The professor who had hired her was jailed—"No one knew when he would be released, or if he would be released at all." Pictures of old friends turned up in the newspaper, sure signs that they had been imprisoned or killed. Scenes like these made Khomeini's actual seizure of power seem, at first, little more than a formality.

Over the ensuing decade—which in addition to the ever tightening grip of the mullahs at home also featured the daily terrors of the Iran-Iraq war—Nafisi irregularly continued with the task of teaching a profane subject in an all-intrusive theocratic regime. (An abrupt retirement, and the birth of her two children, were followed by a return to the classroom in 1988.) Even the death of Khomeini in 1989 failed to provide respite; if anything, the more cynical men who succeeded him proved still more extreme in enforcing their religious commitments. In the early 90's, Nafisi found herself hovering in the peripheral vision of the state security apparatus. Others were not so lucky: several of her students landed in prison. Devoting herself to nurturing an appreciation of Western literature in the best of those remaining, she got the idea of forming a discussion group. Two years after its founding in 1995, she left Iran to

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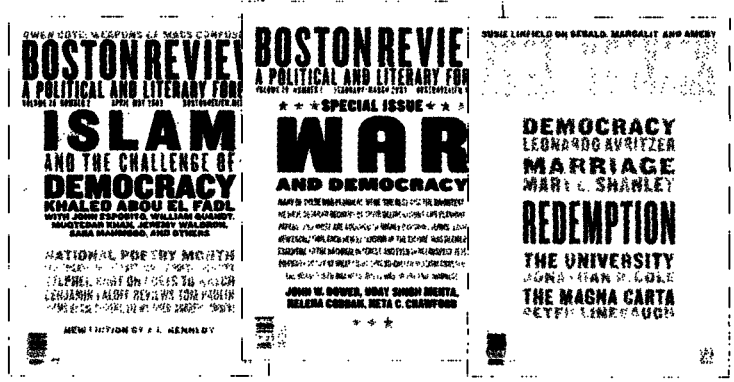

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take up a distinguished academic career in the United States.

NAFISI'S STORY has the makings of, at once, a cloak-and-dagger thriller, a saga of human endurance, and an exercise in the absurd and the terrifying. (Imagine the reaction of an Islamic fundamentalist student to *Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov's great novel of sexual obsession.) Instead, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* turns out to be surprisingly, disappointingly, dull. Rife with ponderous utterances on Nafisi's everyday life and excruciatingly clichéd appreciations of her beloved literary works, it ends as little more than a coffee-klatsch take on one of the most turbulent places and periods in recent history. Even the clandestine meetings of the book club, which had to have been exciting affairs, induce tedium.

The human material that parades before us is potentially fascinating. Nafisi's students range from the beautiful, cosmopolitan Azin to the retiring but intense Nassrin, and her interest in them and their romantic, sexual, and social problems is unfeigned. Other intriguing figures include the religiously orthodox but open-minded Mrs. Rezvan (who persuaded Nafisi to come out of retirement) and Nafisi's "magician," a reclusive intellectual who serves as her mentor, interlocutor, and moral compass. All these clearly *would* be interesting, but something prevents them from actually *being* interesting.

The something is the author's persona, which seems to be irredeemably aloof. Whether she is reading or teaching, undergoing an Iraqi rocket attack on Tehran or shopping for pastry, debating with her students or offering an interpretation of *Pride and Prejudice*, her tone remains a deadly shade of gray. One chapter consists almost in its entirety of her final lecture on *The Great Gatsby*, at the end of which, challenged by one of her more fanatical students, she explicates Fitzgerald's attitude toward his gorgeous, doomed characters in these words: "Dreams, Mr. Nyazi, are perfect ideals, complete in themselves. How can you impose them on a constantly changing, imperfect, incomplete reality?" Considering that she was speaking to someone who had participated enthusiastically in the destruction of her world in the name of another "complete" dream, one of rather more devastating consequence than Jay Gatsby's, the understatement is chilling.

Could this general effect of impersonality be chalked up to the extreme dislocation Nafisi suffered during the Khomeini years? Her universe having crashed in ruins, did she adopt the protective coloration of the slightly disaffected, vaguely superior, always cautious professor—to the point where she can no longer command any other mode? If so, one can hardly blame her. But the loss in literary effect is very great. To measure it, one need only glance at the towering model of *The Gulag Archipelago*, a work that relates physical and spiritual horrors far worse than those suffered by Nafisi yet manages to be unfailingly lively and to be possessed, even, of a peculiar black joy.

In the penultimate chapter of *Reading Lolita*, Nafisi visits her "magician" and suggests to him that she is intending to write a book about her experience under Khomeini. He responds: "Lady, we do not need your truths but your fictions. . . . Perhaps you can trickle in some sort of truth, but spare us your real feelings." Nafisi would appear to have taken his advice much too literally. Striving for objectivity, she has achieved blankness.

There is something at stake here beyond merely literary considerations. Ultimately, every memoir of life under tyranny is an attempt to give voice to those who never survived but were lost to the prisons, the executioner, the torture cells. The real pity of Nafisi's case is that she has largely succeeded in rendering those voices mute.

Lady Luck

Positively Fifth Street: Murderers, Cheetahs, and Binion's World Series of Poker

by James McManus

Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 422 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
Dan Seligman

"LAS VEGAS is either the most unreal place in the world or the most real place. I've lived here 37 years, and I've yet to figure out which it is."

By the point at which James McManus quotes this intriguing statement by Oscar Goodman, a longtime mob lawyer who is now the mayor of Las Vegas, readers will already have gained a pretty good sense of what Goodman is talking about. The city in the desert seems unreal because it sells glitz, glitter, and fantasy; but in one dimension of life, Las Vegas does not fool around. It gets real with a vengeance in its unashamed, undiluted worship of money.

Most Americans gamble some of the time, but gambling's reputation is not good. Playing games with dice and cards is generally thought to be foolish and frivolous; gamblers who seem committed to their "action" are increasingly viewed as psychiatric cases. In the world described by McManus, however, neither judgment holds. Most of the high-level gamblers we meet in his pages come across as supremely rational. In some of the book's memorable passages, especially those involving huge stakes, they attain a kind of nobility: modest and courteous in victory, stoic in defeat. An implicit message of this best-selling book is that you can be a gambler and also a serious person.

POKER, AN institution that came into its own on the American fron-

DAN SELIGMAN *is a contributing editor of* Forbes.

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tier, is a game in which you keep score with money. So it seems appropriate that, by money measures, the World Series of Poker (WSOP), the annual contest memorialized by McManus, now appears to be the largest sporting event in the world. Conceived by Benny Binion of the Horseshoe Casino around 1970, it is a "freezeout" tournament, meaning that the winner is the last man standing. (Thus far it has always been a man, although McManus introduces us to several formidable women players now on the circuit.) During the 1990's, the victor was taking home $1 million, a figure that exceeds anything any winner has earned at Wimbledon, the Kentucky Derby, the Augusta Masters golf tournament, the Superbowl, or baseball's World Series. For the 2000 WSOP, the event described in *Positively Fifth Street*, the winner's take rose to $1.5 million. This year, it stood at $2.5 million.

Anyone can enter the tournament by putting up $10,000 in cash (no checks, no credit cards). You can also invest smaller amounts to enter Horseshoe satellite tournaments whose high-level finishers will win enough to get them into the WSOP. This is what McManus did in the 2000 contest.

The Las Vegas big leagues are dominated by well-heeled professional players—many of them immensely wealthy Asians—experienced in No-Limit Texas Hold'em, the game they play in the WSOP. McManus, a forty-two-year-old teacher at the School of the Arts Institute in Chicago, a novelist and poet with a wife, three children, and a home-equity loan, would not appear to fit the demographic profile. But he had wangled an assignment from *Harper's* to cover the 2000 WSOP while simultaneously reporting on a sensational murder trial, and he decided to invest the magazine's advance of $4,000 in a satellite tournament leading up to the series. A lifelong poker player, he knew that the odds were against him: of the 512 players who entered the 2000 WSOP, only 45 would fail to lose everything they put up.

McManus is an artful and often dazzling writer—dazzling sometimes to the point of obscurity—and in this book he weaves together five or six related story lines. The most important, inevitably, centers on his own incredible adventures in the tournament. A related theme, which comes and goes, is that of a literary outsider sizing up the professionals and their world. (It turns out that most of the high-level players are educated, have more than a touch of class, and, unsurprisingly, tend to be quite brilliant.) Still another important element is McManus's running commentary on the broader Las Vegas culture, which includes a certain amount of reporting on lap-dancing joints and other centers of depravity. The "Cheetahs" in the subtitle is one such place, named for wayward husbands, not jungle cats.

Finally, there is the murder trial for which he was sent to Las Vegas in the first place. The victim was Ted Binion, Benny's son, who had begun his career as a Horseshoe host and for many years looked like the ultimate Las Vegas insider. Ted had fallen apart when his heroin habit ran out of control and he allowed his life to be taken over by his garishly corrupt girlfriend, a former stripper and hooker, and her own thieving boyfriend. In the book's irresistible first chapter, McManus offers a plausible-seeming account, based on coroners' reports and trial testimony, of Ted's gruesome death. Toward the end, he details the high drama of the couple's conviction in a courtroom a few blocks from the Horseshoe, just a few days after the WSOP has been won by Chris "Jesus" Ferguson.

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THOMAS L. PANGLE

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Along the way, we are treated to a lot of poker history laced with literary-political references. McManus is such an entertaining writer that one wants to believe in his reporting, but it must be said that, in areas where his material is checkable, one finds a fair number of ghastly errors. Thus, after lovingly describing a famous head-to-head poker game in 1949 between the legendary Nick the Greek and the equally legendary Johnny Moss, McManus mentions that the $2 or $3 million won by Moss "would be like winning $100 million today"; in fact, the higher figure would now be worth about $22 million. Elsewhere, McManus takes on Richard Nixon's poker play during his World War II naval career and gets three things wrong in twelve lines: he claims that Nixon used his wartime winnings to finance his first congressional race against Helen Gahagan Douglas when the race was against Jerry Voorhis and Nixon did not put up any of his own money; and he says the odds against drawing four cards to an ace and getting a royal flush are 650,000 to 1, when the correct figure is 249,899 to 1.

BUT THE book's primary tale, of McManus's adventures in competition with the world's best players, has to be essentially accurate, if only because the hands he describes are a matter of public record. (The WSOP was televised.) In any case, it is a terrific story.

Just as he (and his wife) feared, McManus loses badly in the early hours of the first day's competition; at the first fifteen-minute break, his $10,000 in chips has shriveled to $2,200. But he manages to hang on, stealing a succession of small pots and winning a larger hand when his queens and jacks are matched against a pair of aces that luckily fails to improve. At the dinner break, his chips are worth $16,450; in the after-dinner action, he wins a big pot; and when the day's play is finally ended, at 2:09 A.M., he is worth $35,325.

The second day begins with 214 players—298 have been eliminated—and our hero's chip count puts him in 41st place. This day's action will proceed until another 169 players have been eliminated, bringing the surviving total down to a final 45—the group in which everyone is guaranteed a minimum payout of $15,000.

McManus and a lot of other characters are determined to make the cut even if it means playing extra-cautiously, but around 4:30 in the afternoon he slides into a huge pot with a Saudi prince whose chip count is twice the size of his own. McManus bets everything he has, the Arab calls, but after the fourth and fifth round of dealing and betting ("Fourth" and "Fifth" Street in the game's lingo), he has survived again. "Good hand," says the prince gamely. Thanks to similar good luck in a match-up with a "bony Vietnamese," McManus ends with $98,000 in chips at the dinner break.

Things turn even better in the post-dinner action. The main event, from McManus's point of view, is a hand in which his opponent is an agreeable Pakistani named Hasan Habib with whom McManus had earlier become friendly. With all his chips bet on a hand that, as he tells us, he has always played for sentimental reasons alone, he lucks out with two pairs that hold up when Habib cannot improve his four diamonds. At the day's end, McManus has not only made the cut but has accumulated chips worth $276,000.

On the evidence of the hands described in the book, McManus played fairly well throughout but also enjoyed a terrific run of fortune. At the end of the third day, his total is $450,000, and he is tied for third place. At the end of the fourth day, with only seven players left, he is in second place with $554,000—versus Ferguson's $2,853,000. All during the fourth and fifth days, the crowd at the Horseshoe is buzzing about the amazing possibility that a reporter sent to cover the event might actually win it.

MCMANUS HIMSELF appears not to have believed in this contingency, or at least not fully. He describes himself as suddenly scared, and states that on day five, "I'm playing . . . . with the liver and heart of a Perdue Oven Stuffer." Then he gets into another matchup with Habib, his friend from Karachi, and his luck vanishes. There is a point at which the author is overwhelmingly likely to win a $970,000 pot, and Hasan is rising from his chair to congratulate him. But then—incredibly, unbearably—Fifth Street goes Hasan's way. McManus is in shock. Left now with only $105,000, against guys with seven or eight times that amount, he figures to exit the tournament soon, and does.

Artistically, his downfall is the right ending. A literary man like McManus must surely have derived some consolation from this thought—the more so as he was also being consoled by the $247,760 check he received for finishing fifth. (It came, to be sure, with a U.S. Treasury Form W-2G, headed "Certain Gambling Winnings.") Still more balm has come his way in the instant, well-deserved popularity of this unique and memorable book.

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Lost Opportunities

Eric A. Hanushek is the Paul and Jean Hanna Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

One way to look at the costs of failed education reforms is to calculate the added money we put into our schools with no improvement in student performance. These costs, although significant, pale in comparison to the opportunity costs to our economy. In failing to reform our schools, we are failing to provide the foundation for our own future economic growth.

The impetus for many education reforms today was *A Nation at Risk*—a federal report issued in 1983 that concluded the United States was hurting itself by maintaining mediocre schools. Unfortunately, the push to improve schools resulting from the report has led to ineffective reforms. Per-pupil spending, for instance, has increased by 50 percent over the past twenty years; pupil-teacher ratios have fallen by a sixth, to sixteen to one; and yet student performance, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, is essentially the same today as it was in 1970.

Although the resources we are providing to schools are increasing, the quality of the education those schools are providing is not. This is a crucial distinction because extensive research demonstrates that education quality, as measured by test scores, is related to the earnings of individuals, national productivity, and economic growth.

Individuals with greater skills tend to earn more than those with lower scores. But each individual's education also has the potential of making others better off: a more educated society has a higher rate of invention, leading to increased productivity, which leads to more invention, which equates to more productivity, and so on. The resulting economic growth determines the improvement that will occur in society's overall standard of living.

Labor force quality can be directly related to the economic growth of a country. Relying on objective measures of the mathematics and science performance of students in many countries during the past four decades, a colleague and I considered differences in national growth (after accounting for differences between countries' levels of income, the average number of years students are in school, and population growth rates).

We discovered that **school quality has profound effects on economic growth**—feasible levels of improvement in math and science skills can lead to as much as a 1 percent increase in the annual growth rate of per capita gross domestic product (GDP). Although 1 percent may not sound significant, consider this: in the year 2000, per capita GDP in the United States was $34,950; an annual growth rate of 1 percent would raise that to $57,480 by 2050—more than a 60 percent increase.

What if the United States had embarked on true school reform at the time of *A Nation at Risk?* Had we lifted math and science performance to the level of the best European countries during the decade of the 1980s, U.S. growth would begin to pick up as those students became a significant portion of the labor force. Today, on the twentieth anniversary of the report, the "reform dividend" from this growth could have exceeded our total annual spending on K–12 education.

The opportunity costs for failing to reform our schools have been high and will only continue to rise if we do not act now to make education reform a reality. The economic future of this nation simply cannot readily afford another twenty years of lost opportunities.

— Eric A. Hanushek

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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